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ADELAIDE;

OR, THE

CHATEAU DE ST. PIERRE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

A TALE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

By MRS. EDGEWORTH.

VOL. III.

In winter's tedious nights, sit by the fire
With good old folks, and let them tell the tales
Of woeful ages, long ago betide.

SHAKSPEARE.

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THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.
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ADELAIDE.

CHAP. I.

Do his bidding; strike.
Thou may'st be valiant in a better cause,
But now....thou seem'st a coward.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was not until the freshness of the morning breeze had somewhat restored her, that the agitated senses of Adelaide could determine whether all that had happened was a reality, or whether she was not still under the influence of sleep; but

but soon the terrible recollection of the events of the preceding evening equally precluded every doubt and hope, and the conviction of being wholly at the mercy of the ruffian whom she had but too powerful reasons to dread, operated so strongly on her imagination, that all the faculties of her soul seemed wrought up beyond the power of feeling, and scarcely left her the consciousness of existence.

For many leagues she thus continued to travel, till at length her conductor turning his horse from the high road, they descended into a narrow valley, overshadowed by high and spreading trees, whose thickly interwoven branches nearly excluded the faint glimmerings

of

of early dawn, and diffused a gloom around, which seemed but too well calculated to favour such scenes of horror as the tortured fancy of Adelaide now suggested; every tale of murder she had ever heard related, rushed with the most horrible aggravation of circumstances to her mind; and when, having reached a spot where the underwood (which had before partly impeded their way) was less luxuriant, her conductor alighted, and attempted to lift her also from the horse, the force of her apprehensions wholly overcame her enfeebled frame, and she again sunk senseless on the ground. On reviving, she perceived that her recovery had been assisted by the efforts of the man who, as he supported her head, still held a cup, from which he had poured some

wine down her throat; and though she had nearly relapsed as, on unclosing her eyes, she again beheld the stern and almost ferocious expression of his countenance, yet the reflection of a few moments convinced her judgement that since he had thus had the humanity to assist her restoration to life, his designs could not be of such an atrocious nature as the terror of her mind had suggested; and, by affording a respite from the agonising expectation of immediate danger, this consideration at length enabled her to obtain a sufficient command over her feelings, to thank him for his succour, and endeavour, by an appearance of composure, to conceal her real sentiments from his notice; and, fearful of irritating him by a refusal, she accepted

from his hand a second cup of wine and a crust of bread, while he made a hearty meal on the contents of a wallet he had brought, fastened to his waist by a broad leathern girdle, and the horse was permitted to graze on the scanty vegetation the place afforded.

Had the countenance of her conductor exhibited any traces of benevolence, Adelaide would doubtless have endeavoured to interest him in her favour; but the stern expression of his large eyes, which was increased by the projection of a pair of bushy black eyebrows, deprived her of the power of making the attempt; and, hopeless of exciting his commiseration, she judged the avowal of her fears would rather

exasperate him against, than induce him to befriend her.

Withheld by this consideration from any endeavour to obtain the so anxiously wished-for yet dreaded information, she suffered herself in silence to be replaced on the horse, and continued to travel through a country, the various wild and picturesque beauties of which would, in other circumstances, have inspired her with the strongest admiration; but now, while the hope of meeting some passenger alone excited her attention, (a hope, which the circumspection of her companion nearly destroyed, by making the most circuitous turnings to avoid passing through the different hamlets, with a distant view of which

which she was occasionally tantalised,) her eyes wandered over the scenery alike unconscious of its change or beauty.

It was not until near the middle of the day that her conductor again suffered her to rest from her fatiguing journey, while he regaled himself with the contents of his wallet; and his horse was also permitted to enjoy a temporary repose; but the agitation of her spirits and extreme weariness occasioned by this mode of travelling, had now so wholly overcome the exhausted frame of Adelaide, that when she was again desired to resume her seat, she declared herself unable to proceed; and, somewhat re-assured by the safety in which

she had hitherto been permitted to remain, she demanded of her companion wherefore she was thus conveyed from her home, and what were his designs? It was not however until she had repeated these inquiries, that she could obtain a reply; and the surly manner in which he then answered, that she should know soon enough, deprived her of all power of repeating the experiment, though the doubtful meaning her fears annexed to his words, served only to increase her anxiety for farther information.

Compelled therefore to endure this cruel suspense, she sat, a prey to the most disgusting and contradictory suggestions; for, while the hope of future security seemed authorised by present safety,

safety, still the remembrance of the late terrible circumstances recurred, and her mind responded but too easily to the apprehensions they were calculated to excite. At length having spent nearly an hour in all the wretchedness of uncertainty, Adelaide was compelled to re-commence her journey, though still wearied and exhausted; she was now, however, informed that she would shortly reach the place of her destination, and she endeavoured to arm herself with fortitude to meet a fate, of whatsoever nature it might prove which seemed unavoidable. Thus, occasionally obtaining a short interval of rest from the fatigue of her extraordinary journey, she continued to travel till the gloom of twilight spread fast over the scene, and a few faint rays

alone marked the point where the sun had set amid the vapours of an autumnal evening. The silence and deep repose of the landscape seemed to impress its character on her sad heart, and she believed herself prepared to endure whatever fate might await her, till, having journied for a considerable time over a widely-extending plain, she perceived herself on the borders of a wood, whose tall trees, veiled in the dusky twilight, appeared to form one mass of solemn and impenetrable shade, when, as her conductor turned his horse toward a narrow tract which wound amidst its dark recesses, the anguish and dismay which struck through her heart, proved her to have been deceived in this belief, and that hope had hitherto sustained her.

It

It now occurred to her tortured fancy that her destruction had only been delayed till the shades of evening should have removed the probability of meeting other travellers; and that her conductor, whom she feared would also prove her assassin, had chosen the woods still more to preclude the probability of discovery.

CHAP. II.

———Wrapt in the midnight
Of the clouds, sits Terror, meditating
Woe. Her doubtful form appears and fades
Like the shadow of Death, when he mingles
With the gloom of the sepulchre, and broods
In lonely silence.

ALTHOUGH Adelaide had not fainted, yet so nearly were her senses overpowered by apprehension, that it was not until she was lifted from the horse, that she became conscious of having emerged in safety from the woods, whose gloomy

gloomy shades had so powerfully renewed her terrors.

On raising her eyes she now, however, perceived herself to be at the entrance of an extensive pile of building, the gates of which was unlocked by her conductor, who, hallooing loudly for a light, was quickly answered in the higher tones of female voices; and while Adelaide listened, with a beating heart, she beheld two women advance from a door at the extremity of the hall, one of whom held a lamp, whose glimmering rays falling partially on the checquered marble pavement, as with her hand she shielded it carefully from the strong current of air, served only to enlighten that part from which she had issued, and toward

toward which, still violently trembling, though somewhat re-assured, Adelaide feebly moved, gladly quitting Durand, (for to his custody she had been consigned,) who remained a few moments without, while he led his horse to the stable.

Perceiving the difficulty with which Adelaide appeared to walk, the youngest of the females (who it may be recollected was Josephine) offered the assistance of her arm, which was willingly and thankfully accepted; and leaning with the heavy pressure of a nearly exhausted frame, Adelaide slowly followed the steps of Marguerite, who led the way to the kitchen; when, unable to proceed farther, Adelaide threw herself on a bench near

near the door, and burst into a violent flood of tears.

While yielding to this indulgence, she felt her aching head relieved; but her spirits once softened from that state of "out-breathed despair," in which she had passed the preceding half hour, were no longer under controul. Vainly she endeavoured to articulate the inquiries her situation prompted her to make; convulsive sobs wholly impeded her utterance; and while the tears still flowed in torrents from her eyes, she could only by signs decline the officious, though well-meant, entreaties of Josephine, to remove to a more commodious seat. Marguerite, meanwhile, surprised and perplexed, spoke not to her unhap-

py

py guest, but eyeing her with an inquisitive curiosity, which her appearance, her tears, and the extraordinary manner of her arrival, altogether conspired to excite, she anxiously waited the entrance of her husband, from whom she hoped to obtain an explanation.

Adelaide had not yet been able to command her voice, when Durand again appeared; and taking his wife and daughter apart, spoke to them for some moments in a whisper, while Adelaide, in whom the sight of her conductor had renewed an emotion of terror she could not wholly subdue, averted her head from the side on which he stood, till perceiving that the voices had ceased, she again turned towards him, and found

found that the females had withdrawn, and Durand alone remained. The presence of the women, although their characters were unknown to her, had seemed to afford a degree of protection, which, in her present situation, was of too much importance to be willingly resigned by the still weeping Adelaide; and, when taking the lamp from the table, Durand said he would conduct her to the chamber where she was to pass the night, she refused to accompany him, unless they also were permitted to attend her. The assurance, however, of their being gone to prepare her apartment, which she received from Durand in reply, induced her to follow him to the chambers which have formerly been described, on entering which, she

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S

she found that Marguerite and Josephine were in reality there.

Restored to a degree of confidence by this proof of the veracity of her guide, she suffered him to lead her into the interior apartment; where, placing the lamp he had brought on a table, Durand instantly withdrew, and before Adelaide had recovered strength to rise from the seat on which she had thrown herself, she heard the outward door of the antichamber shut, and locked on the outside; and on entering it, had the mortification of perceiving that the females had also withdrawn. Thus disappointed, she resolved not to seek repose, however wearied she might be, without having previously secured herself from intrusion

sion by every means in her power; and taking the lamp from the table, she began to examine both the chambers, and sound the tapestry hangings, lest any part of them should conceal an entrance. Happily this suspicious circumstance, so frequently to be found in old houses, and which she had such powerful reason to dread, did not add to her uneasiness; and after bolting both the door of the anti-chamber and a second door in the bed-chamber, which (though its being locked on the outside, left her the power of conjecture) she imagined led also into the gallery, and barricaded them with as many chairs and tables as her exhausted strength would permit her to move; she climbed upon one of the high window seats, and at length having

suc-

succeeded in withdrawing the rusty bolts, she opened the casements, in order to ascertain the situation of her apartments, should any alarming circumstance induce her to attempt an escape; but the darkness of the night scarcely allowed her to distinguish more than the outline of the woods which nearly encompassed the edifice; and chilled by the coldness of the blast, she closed the casement, when, on turning from it, she perceived that her lamp was extinguished by the air which the window had admitted, and her chamber was only enlightened by the tremulous gleam of a few dying embers on the hearth, which had been lighted to air the apartment.

Had she not already examined the cham-

chambers and secured the doors, the increasing gloom, the dismal appearance of the black furniture, and profound stillness of the apartment, which even now revived a degree of apprehension, would probably have operated too powerfully on her imagination to permit her to approach the bed, but the consciousness of having taken these precautions at length re-assured her; and having thus subdued her present fears, and endeavoured, by prayer, to fortify her mind against the future, she threw herself on the bed, without taking off her clothes.

The extraordinary incidents of the preceding twenty-four hours were, however, too recently impressed to be easily banished

banished from her thoughts; nor, heavily as sleep pressed her eye-lids, could she suffer herself to yield to its influence, until she had endeavoured to unravel the mystery of her situation; and the more she reflected, the more she was bewildered in conjecture, and at a loss to account for the treatment she had experienced.

Although the behaviour of M. de Bertonville (for it was himself who had assisted in taking her from the Château de Bertonville) had frequently evinced his dislike, yet she could not impute his present conduct to any personal enmity, but rather to a desire of possessing the property to which, by the will of Madame de Bertonville, he was to succeed,

ceed, in the event of Adelaide's dying without issue, or before she attained her eighteenth year; yet, on farther consideration, even this appeared improbable, since her death alone could entitle him to the inheritance; and, however strongly the present tone of her spirits disposed her to yield to the suggestions of fear, still her judgment could not but admit the conclusion, that if his purpose was really to possess himself of her estates by causing her death, he would not thus long have suffered the execution of his designs to be delayed, when so many opportunities had already occurred for their perpetration. But while her reason rejected this interpretation of his conduct, it refused to assist her in forming any other conjectures;

and

and weariness at length having subdued anxiety, she sunk into repose.

After a night of sounder slumbers than it is probable she would have enjoyed had they not been occasioned by extreme fatigue, she awoke to a sense of gratitude for having passed the night in safety; feeling, however, still languid and unrefreshed, she did not arise till a loud knocking at the door of the antichamber compelled her to do so; when having at length removed the barricades she had placed the preceding night, and undrawn the bolt with which she had secured the door, Durand entered, holding a bason of coffee and a plate of bread.

Per-

Perceiving the derangement of the furniture as he placed what he had brought on a table, he eyed Adelaide with an air of stern scrutiny, from which she involuntarily shrunk, and in a tone of authority demanded the cause of the confusion he beheld, and if she was but just risen. To the latter she replied in the affirmative.

"By your appearance, however," said Durand, interrupting her, "I should have thought you had not been in bed for the night. How is it; am I right?" he added; while, fixing his eyes on her countenance, he seemed desirous of penetrating her thoughts.

Unaccustomed to hear her assertions

 doubted,

doubted, Adelaide did not immediately reply, till recollecting that, by allowing him to continue in the supposition of her having watched during the night, which could only be for the purpose of attempting an escape, she would probably thereby subject herself to additional restraint, she answered that she had been in bed, but had not taken off her clothes from the apprehension of being disturbed as she had been on the preceding night; and that the same fear had also occasioned her to barricade the door.

"You need not let that fear prevent your sleeping then," said Durand gruffly; "you'll not be asked to travel farther."

"I must

"I must beg you to explain yourself," interrupted Adelaide; "tell me, I conjure you, tell me for what purpose I am brought hither."

"It is none of my business to answer such questions," answered Durand; "nor would you, perhaps, be better pleased if I did."

Saying this, he abruptly left the chamber, having previously locked the door which separated that apartment from the bed chamber, and taking the same precaution at that through which he now retired; while Adelaide, alarmed by the peculiar emphasis with which he uttered (or she supposed him to utter) the last sentence, remained without the power

of farther satisfying her curiosity, so powerfully and additionally excited.

For some moments she sat lost in disquieting conjectures; and though, from having continued so long without taking any sustenance, she felt that it was now become necessary, yet, sickening at the doubtful import which her fears annexed to his words, she feared to taste the coffee he had brought, lest by some noxious infusion, her death, in order to spare an effusion of blood, might thereby be designed.

While thus agitated by fearful and too probable surmises, she fancied she distinguished footsteps in the inner chamber; and approaching the door of com-

communication, which, wholly occupied by his words, she had not observed Durand lock, she endeavoured, though ineffectually, to open it; but the rumbling noise, as attentively listening, she now distinctly heard, convinced her there was some person within; presently, however, all became quiet; and as she still listened, Durand re-entered from the gallery, and having unlocked the door between the chambers, was again retiring in silence, when Adelaide, feeling that almost any certainty would be preferable to her present state of suspense, caught hold of his arm, and besought him to relieve her mind by informing her why she was thus torn from her home and detained a prisoner.

"I shall tell you no more than I have done already," said Durand, disengaging himself from her hold, and moving toward the door.

"One moment more, I entreat you," exclaimed Adelaide, with clasped hands and a look of eager supplication and terror; "if you have any pity in your nature, leave me not in this wretched uncertainty! Say, only say wherefore I am brought hither. Is it possible," she added, perceiving that he seemed to deliberate, "is it possible that you, who are yourself a father, can be accessary to———"

"Accessary!" hastily repeated Durand, rudely seizing her arm, and fixing his

his eyes on her face; "accessary! say, to what have I been accessary?"

Terrified at the extraordinary and increasing vehemence of his manner,

"I asked," she replied, scarcely able to sustain herself, "how, as a father, you could be accessary to the unmerited oppression of an orphan?"

"'Tis enough," answered Durand quickly; and, suffering her arm to drop, while he averted his face from her inquiring eyes, he abruptly quitted the chamber.

CHAP. III.

'Tis conscience thus makes cowards of us all.
SHAKSPEARE.

THE alarming suggestions which the preceding night Adelaide had vainly endeavoured to persuade herself were but the effects of a timid and terrified imagination, seemed now, however, too strongly corroborated by the ambiguous expressions of Durand, and the extraordinary emotions she had witnessed, when appealing to his humanity, to be dis-

disregarded; and as she anxiously revolved all the circumstances which had occurred since her departure from the Chateau de St. Pierre, each separately considered, tended but to confirm her in these terrible surmises.

All the inconsistencies of the Baron's behaviour, which had occasioned her to pass so many unpleasant hours, she now hesitated not to impute to the struggles of conscience, previous to the final determination of her fate; and the sending forward her maid Annette, she also perceived to have been an act of cruel policy, of which the faithful girl's reluctance to leave her seemed now almost prophetic.

Though refreshment was become necessary to her, yet more strongly than ever impressed with the idea of its possessing some destructive quality, she resolved not to taste the coffee which Durand had brought; and, meditating various plans of escape, some one of which she determined to adopt whenever the shades of evening should sufficiently favour her design, she passed the successive hours till long after the middle of the day, when, as seated on one of the high window seats, anxiously surveying the woods, whose deep recesses she hoped would soon facilitate her projects, she heard the door of the anti-chamber unlocked, and some person enter with heavy footsteps, and speedily

retire again, locking the door of her prison.

Determined to withstand the temptation of food, an additional supply of which she imagined Durand to have brought, she changed not her position to ascertain the fact, but continued impatiently to watch the declining course of the sun, while the brilliancy of its rays, as it now gradually sunk behind the hills, heightened the tints of the opposite woods, and added a degree of beauty to the scenery, to which, even in the present agitation of her mind, she could not be wholly insensible, since the contemplation of his works recalled her to a sense of the protection of their great Author; and she felt her mind strength-

ened and soothed into confidence by the consideration of his over-ruling providence.

While she continued to gaze, the partial but dazzling splendor of some object on the top of one of the hills, which bounded that part of the prospect, arrested her attention, and she fancied it to proceed from the window of some distant edifice on which the sun's last rays still lingered; but the purple mist with which all, excepting the summits of the mountains, was invested, prevented her from ascertaining the fact, though the conjecture was for a few moments nearly confirmed into conviction, by the recollection of a large village, of which, toward the close of

her

her journey, she had had a distant view; till, on more deliberate reflection, she perceived the impossibility of this structure's (if such it was) forming any part of the village she had seen, as that was at the farthest extremity of the wild and dreary plain she had traversed; whereas this was situated on one of the hills, which, uniting with the distant woods, appeared, from the apartments Adelaide occupied, to form one vast rampart to her prison.

Less able, as the successive minutes increased the haziness of twilight, to discern whether this distant object was in reality a building, she still continued to strain her sight toward it till the sound of a key turning in the door of the

the anti-chamber withdrew her attention; and fearful of exciting a suspicion of her intentions by being seen in the window at so late an hour, she hastily quitted her seat, and entered the anti-chamber at the moment Durand approached from the opposite door. In his hand he held a lamp, which placing on the table, he perceived the food he had brought in the early part of the day remained still untouched; and demanding the reason of its being so, and whether Adelaide intended to starve herself. She replied, she had no such intention; but that the extraordinary treatment she had experienced in being thus confined, left her but little inclination to partake of food.

"If,

"If, therefore," she continued, feeling her courage revived by the plan she had formed to escape; "if, therefore, your wish is that I should accept the nourishment you bring, you will not refuse to inform me why I am in confinement, and how long your purpose is thus to detain me; surely," she added, perceiving that he again seemed to deliberate, while his features exchanged their savage cast for an expression she fancied to denote a mingled emotion of confusion and remorse; "surely you will not purposely aggravate the uneasiness I suffer, by persevering in a silence which cannot be required by your employer, wholly as I am now in his power."

"If you dislike confinement," muttered

tered Durand, "you should not have done anything to deserve it; but—"

"To deserve it!" exclaimed Adelaide with astonishment; "in what manner have I deserved it?"

"I can't say as to that," replied Durand; "however, you may as well eat your supper, for fasting won't mend sorrow; and here's something I was desired to give you from the Baron, that, perhaps, may tell you more of the matter."

Saying this, and having placed a parcel he had brought on the table, he delivered to Adelaide a billet, and withdrew; while, with trembling hands and

a pal-

a palpitating heart, she broke the seal and read as follows :

"You will perhaps accuse me of cruelty and injustice in the part I have acted toward you; but desperate as are the circumstances which oblige me to such a conduct, you should rather acknowledge the mildness of my measures than complain of oppression; if, therefore, you value your safety, you will submit without resistance to the situation in which, ere this reaches you, you will be placed; and the knowledge you have of my disposition, will probably be an additional motive for your doing so, when I add that such submission can alone ensure it; and that any attempt to escape will not only, from the

the precautions I have taken, prove entirely futile, but occasion me to proceed to extremities I should not otherwise practice."

Though this short billet afforded Adelaide no positive information, yet its contents seemed strongly to confirm the idea she had formed as to the occasion of the confinement in which she now understood she was to remain, while the mysterious warning contained in the last lines, deprived her of every wish to prosecute her meditated plan of escape, since, from her knowledge of the Baron's character, she had indeed no reason to suppose he intended to terrify her into compliance by threats he meant not to put into execution; and though this eventful

paper seemed to afford an assurance of safety while she submitted to the will of her oppressor, yet the terms in which even this was expressed, were too vague to allow her to rely on them.

Of the inflexibility of the Baron's character Adelaide had witnessed but too many instances, to permit her to indulge any degree of hope that he would relent; and were his disposition less cruel, less severe, yet it was probable that he would still be restrained from the clemency and retribution he might otherwise be hereafter disposed to practise, by a dread of exposing himself to the censure of the world for the unwarrantable measures he had already adopted; but she considered that the sudden and secret

secret manner in which she had disappeared from the Chateau could not be long concealed from the domestics of the family, however it would be the interest of Mr. de Bertonville to purchase their silence; and as this method could not be adopted towards any, except his immediate dependants, it might not be so easy to prevent the comments of others, since conscious integrity shrinks not from observation; and the very precautions by which he would probably endeavour to elude suspicion, would, on the contrary, be more likely to excite it; she reflected therefore, with a sickening heart, that should the mysteriousness of her absence become known, and sufficiently rouse the curiosity of the public to occasion any

un-

unpleasant rumours on the subject, it was but too probable he would have recourse to such measures as would effectually preclude all possibility of discovery; and that unhappy propensity to aggravate present evils by anticipation of the future, to which the mind unconsciously yields when its powers are weakened by actual suffering, suggested also to her perturbed imagination that from the ambiguous expressions he had uttered, Durand might even now, perhaps, be empowered to perpetrate the meditated purpose, whenever his employer found cause to apprehend that a discovery of the truth was likely to deprive him of the possessions to which her supposed death could alone entitle him.

In such gloomy and fearful surmises, (and which acquired additional probability from the recollection of the dreadful scene she had witnessed in the woods of the Chateau de Bertonville) Adelaide passed the remainder of the evening; and though faint from the want of nourishment, her apprehensions of their pernicious qualities were still too powerful to suffer her to taste either the coffee or soup which had been brought by Durand; but as the bread did not excite her suspicions, she ventured to partake of that, and to assuage her thirst with the water which had been left in her chamber: and having carefully renewed her examination of the doors and hangings, she at length retired to her bed; but, recovered from the extreme

extreme sense of fatigue which had procured her the comfort of sleep on the preceding night, the anxiety of her mind now kept her in a state of melancholy watchfulness; and no sooner did the faint gleam of morning break upon her window, than, restless and dejected, she arose, and taking her station at the open casement, continued to observe the gradual though tardy approach of day. No yellow lines of light illumined the horizon, and preceded the rising sun; a dark gloom hung over the woods; and corresponding to the state of her mind was this desolate appearance.

The sad scene she had witnessed the evening preceding her departure from the Chateau de Bertonville, dwelt heavily.

vily upon her thoughts: and though until now she had had but little leisure to reflect on any subject which did not immediately relate to her situation, yet the remembrance of the unfortunate being who had fallen a victim to the barbarity of its fellow creatures, had seldom been effaced from her imagination; and it now recurred to her with additional horror and commiseration, from the dreadful presentiment of a similarity of fate, which she found it impossible to subdue, since reflection seemed rather to confirm than dispel apprehension. That the persons whom she had seen in the woods were no other than the Baron and Durand she had no longer any doubt; for though on that eventful night the whispers of

the former were too low and indistinct to permit her to decide with any degree of certainty, yet his companion, whom the terrors of a guilty conscience seemed to have thrown off his guard, had spoken sufficiently loud to convince her, now that the voice of Durand was but too familiar to her ear, of his being the associate; and wholly in the power of a person whom she had such powerful cause to dread, it is not surprising that she yielded to despondency. At length the disquieting train of thought in which she sat absorbed was interrupted by a summons to open her chamber door; and it was not without an effort of resolution that she could obey it, so strongly had the subject she had been revolving

increased her repugnance to behold the stern countenance of Durand.

The door at length being unlocked, he entered, holding, as before, a plate of bread and a bason of coffee; and perceiving again the soup and coffee of the preceding day still untouched, he demanded, also, as he had before done, the reason of her not tasting them.

Whether it in reality did so, or that her alarmed imagination deceived her, the harsh features of Durand appeared to Adelaide to wear even more than their usual expression of malignity; and deeply affected with a sense of her situ-

situation, she remained for some moments without the power of replying.

"It seems," said Durand, at length interrupting the silence, "that my attendance does not satisfy you; and in truth I am not much accustomed to serve a lady; but however, we may as well make a virtue of necessity, and reconcile us to each other."

The tone of familiarity in which this was spoken recalled Adelaide to a sense of the necessity of self command; and assuming an air of firmness, she answered:

"I can never reconcile myself to my

present situation, otherwise than by the consciousness of not deserving it; and the certain conviction that, however my oppressors may triumph for a time, we shall each be finally rewarded according to our deserts. These consoling truths," she added, after a pause of reflection, "will assuredly support my courage amidst whatever sufferings may be reserved for me; but the sense of what is due to myself will never permit me to dissemble."

However hardened it may be, it rarely happens that a guilty mind can remain unabashed in the presence of the virtuous; and whether or not in the present instance its powerful influence was thus peculiarly felt by Durand, it is certain

that his countenance betrayed strong emotion as he listened to Adelaide, who, deeply interested in its cause, watched the varying expression of his features with painful curiosity.

"I can tell you—" at length said he, and he hesitated, while Adelaide had no power to inquire what he could disclose; "I can tell you," he resumed, "that it is no greater pleasure to me to attend upon you, than it seems to be to you to have me; and.....if I could trust you.... perhaps it might be otherwise; but you must promise, if I do allow it—aye, you must take your oath first. Do you hear? will you take your oath?"

"I will take no oath against my con-

 science,"

science," replied Adelaide, in a firm and solemn tone, recovering her resolution.

"Oh, ho! you won't!" said Durand gruffly; "then I pretty well understand you, and shall take my measures accordingly."

He then turned toward the door, and was going, though slowly, when Adelaide, recollecting the impolicy of suffering him, thus exasperated, to leave her—

"You forget," said she, "that you have not told me what it is you require of me, and——"

"But be it what it may," interrupted Durand.

Durand, with a sarcastic smile, "you are resolved not to comply with it; so it matters not what it may be."

"You misunderstand me," said Adelaide faintly, anxiety overcoming the degree of resentment which this behaviour had excited; "you misunderstand me," she repeated; "explain what it is you have to propose, I entreat you."

"Will you promise compliance if I tell you?" demanded he, returning from the door, which he had now reached.

"How can I promise compliance without knowing what is required of me?" asked Adelaide.

"You appear not to like my attendance," said he, without seeming to notice her last words; "and this being the case, if I could be sure you would not tamper with them, I might, perhaps, make over the office to my wife and daughter. But unless, as I have before said, unless you will promise not to hold any conversation with them, we must continue as we are. Do you promise it?" he demanded, sternly eyeing her.

"I do indeed," replied Adelaide eagerly, while the idea of being no longer subjected to the officious services of this man seemed a relief to her mind of no small importance.

"Consider well, however," said he, sur-

surveying her for some moments with a frown so terrific that she involuntarily shrunk back; "consider well before you promise; for I warn you that the consequence of forswearing yourself will be worse than you can possibly expect."

There was something in his manner of pronouncing this, and in the deep tone of his voice, that shocked and alarmed her even more than the words themselves, and Adelaide remained silent until Durand again demanded whether she chose to accept the conditions or not.

Tremblingly she replied in the affirm- ative;

ative; and her courage, re-animated by the rectitude of her principles—

"I fear not to accept them," she added, "since, if I know myself, no selfish motive will ever induce me to persuade others to betray their trust."

"If you act as you speak," answered Durand, while an expression of doubtful scrutiny passed over his countenance, "all will be well; but, however, you are aware of the consequence; and if, by forfeiting your word, you incur it, you can only blame yourself; so in future you will be served by my wife or daughter."

Saying

Saying this he quitted the chamber, but as he unclosed the door, he again turned toward Adelaide, and repeated his injunction to her of not holding any conversation with the women.

CHAP. IV.

——Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.

SHAKSPEARE.

ONCE more left to solitude and reflection, Adelaide had but too much leisure to revolve the late conversation she had held with Durand; but while she dwelt with inexpressible satisfaction on the assurance she had received of being for the future attended by persons of her own sex, she could not dismiss from her

her thoughts the earnest manner in which Durand had enjoined her not to converse with either his wife or daughter, and the solemn warning he had added, and which seemed but too strongly to prognosticate how little room there was for hope, and how wholly she was in the power of this man. She had, however, engaged herself to abide by the conditions of this new regulation; and as the agitation which the presence of Durand always excited gradually subsided, and allowed her to think with clearness, she perceived that, unless by forfeiting her word she incurred the threatened danger, the change in her attendants, or more properly jailors, though not essentially serviceable, must yet afford a degree of comparative comfort;

fort; and she resolved not to yield to the belief which his look and manner, while Durand spoke, had excited, of this proposal being merely a snare to lure her to destruction, since she considered that, wholly as she was now in his power, it was beyond the limits of probability that he would employ stratagem to effect such a purpose.

While she yet mused, the key sounded in the lock, the door opened, and she beheld Marguerite enter, closely followed by her daughter, at whose entrance the door was again secured, and they both passed into the bed chamber, where they remained some moments occupied in arranging the apartment, after which they returned through the

anti-

anti-chamber without speaking, though the eyes of both were fixed on Adelaide, each time they traversed the apartment, with an expression of curiosity which seemed to evince the violence their inclinations suffered by persevering in silence.

When they had quitted the chamber Adelaide recollected the circumstances of her having been locked in her apartment the preceding day by Durand; and she now perceived that the noise she had heard from the inner chamber must have proceeded from the arranging her apartment, which having been done, had not until now occurred to her.

Deprived of even the resource of

books, the hours slowly and heavily elapsed, while Adelaide remained fixed in a profound reverie, which at length was interrupted by the return of Marguerite, who now brought a portion of the family dinner, and retired in silence as before.

The calls of hunger were, however, no longer to be subdued; and considering that it was in vain to resist the temptation of food, since even the bread and water, of which alone she had hitherto partaken, would probably soon be impregnated with poison if such was reall the intention of Durand, Adelaide ate, with an avidity very unusual to her, of the meat which had been placed before her; nor could the possibility of her

late terrible surmise, as it still presented itself to her imagination, deter her from concluding her solitary meal, so greatly did she now feel the want of sustenance; but her hunger once appeased, her suspicions again returned; and though strongly combated by reason, she remained agitated with the apprehension of having accelerated her fate, by accepting the offered nourishment; and the faintness and uneasy sensations she for some hours experienced, which in reality were occasioned by having until now too long abstained from necessary food, she fancied to proceed from this terrible cause. When these, however, gradually left her, her immediate fears also gradually subsided; and though her heart seemed to recoil

from

from hope as the recollection of past and dreadful circumstances was again revived, other remembrances, less gloomy, yet more peculiarly distressing, at length obliterated these from her imagination; and all consciousness of her own situation was lost in renewed grief for her deceased friends, from whom the idea of being for ever separated again seemed like a horrible dream, from which she vainly endeavoured to awaken. From the fulness of her heart, her tears now flowed; and while with unutterable anguish she dwelt on the idea of her beloved Lady Abbess, it was some alleviation of affliction that this valued protectress was spared the suffering which a knowledge of Adelaide's situation would have occasioned her; and she

raised

raised her streaming eyes to Heaven in thankfulness for this conviction.

From this distressing subject her thoughts were at length recalled by the appearance of Marguerite, who, accompanied by her daughter, brought a supply of food, and a small lamp, which having placed on a table, they again withdrew in silence. So wholly absorbed in melancholy had Adelaide been, that until now she had not observed that a few faint streaks of red, which still lingered in the west, were the only vestiges of departed day; and that she had suffered the opportunity to escape of endeavouring to ascertain, by watching if the sun's declining rays were reflected on the windows, whether the object which

which had arrested her attention on the preceding night were, as she had conjectured, a distant building.

During the day the thick fog which hung on the mountain tops, and obscured all but their indented outline, had prevented her from discerning any small objects; but as the evening gradually closed in, the mist disappeared, and perceiving the brilliancy in which the sun was preparing to set, she had determined on watching its declining course, and marking the effect, till sorrow effaced this resolve from her memory.

From the momentary regret she experienced on perceiving that she had

lost

lost the opportunity of making these observations, the consideration of how unavailing, were she even to ascertain the fact, this discovery would prove to her, soon withdrew her thoughts; and the too great certainty of thereby incurring some terrible punishment, should she be detected in the attempt, soon also convinced her of the folly of the plan she had formed the preceding day, of escaping from her chamber window during the silence of night, and endeavouring to find her way through the woods, either across the widely-extending common she had traversed with Durand, to the hamlet of which she then had obtained a distant sight, or to this edifice as a nearer asylum, should she ascertain its being such. Perceiving there-

therefore the utter impracticability of this undertaking, wholly unacquainted as she was with the woods through which, to accomplish either purpose, she must necessarily pass, she felt the wisdom of relinquishing her design, though she shrunk from the idea of remaining beneath the power of Durand.

Still endeavouring to arm herself with fortitude and patience, yet involuntarily imagining a thousand evils for futurity, slowly and heavily passed the hours till midnight, when she counted the sullen notes of the great clock as they vibrated from the hall through the gallery, unmingled with any sound but the chill and hollow blast that whistled among the now leafless trees; and though she felt

felt but little desire to sleep, yet the solitude and increasing obscurity of her chamber, as her lamp, slowly expiring, faintly flashed upon the walls, renewed the terrors of fancy, and she hastened to find her way to the bed before it was quite extinguished. The anxiety of her mind, however, did not permit her to enjoy much repose; and soon after the morning dawned through her casements, she arose. Nearly at the same hours as on the preceding day, her different meals were brought by Marguerite, who was sometimes accompanied by her daughter; but from these visits Adelaide derived little comfort, since, strongly as the looks of both indicated a contrary wish, it appeared by the silence they preserved, that they had also

also been enjoined it; and were the occasion even more urgent, the promise she had given to Durand, and the dread of incurring the threatened consequences, had too deeply impressed the mind of Adelaide to have suffered her to interrupt this mysterious silence.

Thus unmarked by any new occurrence passed several successive days; during which, the only mitigation of uneasiness they afforded was the conviction of her having been unnecessarily apprehensive with respect to her daily food, of which she no longer, as formerly, feared to partake; but while, from a sense of the duty of resignation, she frequently sought to withdraw her thoughts from the anxiety that preyed upon

upon them, the want of occupation to assist her in the endeavour rendered it fruitless; and notwithstanding her efforts at self-command, the extraordinary incidents she had witnessed and experienced were still too recent to permit of abstraction; nor while the contrast of her present situation brought a retrospect of the happy tranquillity of her early days, did it excite scarcely less astonishment than grief. Could she indeed have foreseen any certain termination of it, it is probable that the gentle character of her mind might have disposed her to endure her imprisonment with equal fortitude and patience; but reason afforded no such consolation; for while it enabled her to extend her reflections beyond the present evil, it

afforded a too certain conviction that her imprisonment must be decided and perpetual. There were even times when the desire of regaining her liberty, enforced by certain remembrances which crowded to her memory, so far overcame prudence, that she again looked round in search of a possibility of escape, and for a few moments felt willing to encounter any hazard; but these resolutions were as transient as impracticable; and more mature deliberation convinced her but too strongly of the danger of such an attempt.

Nearly a month had thus elapsed, during the latter days of which, the unusual confinement and anxiety of mind she had suffered occasioned a degree of indis-

indisposition, which, almost reduced to despondency, she neither felt the power nor the inclination to combat. A fever was on her spirits, and an universal lassitude prevailed over her frame, the effects of which were too apparent to remain unnoticed by her daily visitors; but whatever feelings of compassion her situation might excite, were solely expressed by their looks, as they were still invariably silent. One morning, however, as, dejectedly musing, she awaited the entrance of Marguerite, she was surprised by the appearance of Durand.

"I come," said he, approaching her, "to inquire after your health; for my wife tells me now you are not well."

"I thank you," answered Adelaide mildly; "your wife said truly; I am, indeed, far from well."

"But what ails you? I hear that you do not eat; is it that you are sick, or do not like the food you get?" said Durand. "If you wish for anything else," he continued, "ask, and you shall have it."

"I wish for nothing within these walls," replied Adelaide; "give me my liberty, and I shall then," she continued with a deep sigh, "I shall then be well; I shall then thank you."

"You ask more than is in my power to grant. Your liberty does not depend

on

on me; nay, more I will tell you; if it was known to the Baron that I allowed you the attendance of my wife and daughter, I question if he would suffer you to continue even here; but, perhaps, would——"

"Even here!" interrupted Adelaide, whose exhausted spirits could not support the apprehension of any new evil; "even here! then whither would he send me? If you know his purpose, fear not to tell it me, for I am prepared for the worst; but suspence tortures my heart; nor shall I," she added, bursting into tears, "long be able to endure it."

"I meant not to alarm you; nor do

 I know

I know any thing you need fear," said Durand, "though you seem cruelly apt to frighten yourself. I shall hardly tell the Baron that I have disobeyed his orders, so that unless he pays us a visit, he will never know it."

"Do you then expect he will come?" inquired Adelaide, soothed by the assurances of Durand.

"Expect him!" repeated he, "no, no, there's no chance of our seeing him here; but I must be gone, for I have other business, and I shall be glad to see you look better to-morrow—in the mean time, if you will ask my wife for what you want, she shall give it you, if we have it."

"But

"But have you not forbidden me to speak to her?" demanded Adelaide; "how then—."

"True, I had forgot, and I still forbid you to hold any farther conversation with her, for your own sake alone, as both she and my daughter know their duty; but I do not mean that you should not speak for what you want, and I wish you better." Saying this, he quitted the chamber while Adelaide dried her tears; and, soothed by this short conversation with Durand, who had evinced a degree of humanity she had little expected, something like hope began to revive in her heart, though reflection (as her thoughts reverted to the dreadful scene she had witnessed in

the woods of the Chateau de Bertonville) offered nothing to support it, but rather compelled her to attribute this alteration in his manner to some secret cause which induced him to dissemble. Whatever this might be, she had, however, no means of judging; and she mused upon it long in uneasiness and doubt; till, from this subject, her thoughts at length were withdrawn by the appearance of Marguerite, who, half unclosing the door, advanced her head, and demanded, if "*the lady*" wanted any thing. To this inquiry, Adelaide replied by desiring that a fire might be lighted in her chamber; and, as Marguerite withdrew to obey the order, Adelaide could scarcely forbear smiling at the attitude of hesitation in which the good woman had stood, and the mingled

mingled expression of apprehension and curiosity with which she had regarded her. In a short time, Marguerite returned with the wood, and its bright blaze soon dispelled the gloom of the chamber; after which Adelaide was again left alone, and, drawing her chair toward the hearth, she slightly partook of the supper which had also been brought, and then employed herself in replacing the small sticks as they fell from the fire, till they were all consumed, when, deprived of this occupation, she retired to her pillow.

The following day, Durand did not, as he had given her reason to expect, repeat his visit; Adelaide was, however, regularly attended by Marguerite, who,

being no longer interdicted from speech, seemed desirous of compensating to herself for the mortification she had heretofore sustained, had Adelaide been disposed to indulge her; but the promise she had given to Durand on this subject permitted her not to encourage any farther conversation than what merely related to what she had occasion to demand; and, though she checked the supposition, yet the disappointment of Marguerite was so evident in her countenance, that for a few moments it occurred to her, that this woman had been employed to decoy her into some snare. Reason, however, could not juctify this surmise; since, wholly as she was in the power of her persecutors, stratagem was not requisite to enable them

them to effect their designs, and reflexion soon convinced her, that it was but the effect of a timid imagination, now rendered more peculiarly susceptible of fanciful apprehensions by bodily indisposition. Several days thus passed on, during which Josephine had occasionally attended on Adelaide; who, although she could only judge of her by her countenance and manner, yet these had much that attracted her notice; and, from that propensity to attach itself to whatever is amiable to which young and benevolent minds are peculiarly disposed, she began to entertain a predeliction in favour of this girl, which was justified by the interest she appeared to take in her recovery. Various little attentions evinced her inclination to

extend her services to the utmost in her power; and, had not the word of Adelaide been solemnly passed, she thought she perceived that Josephine would not have required much persuasion to induce her to assist her flight.

At length the indisposition under which Adelaide laboured began gradually to abate; and with returning health, her spirits also recovered their tone, and her thoughts again glanced toward the hope of escape, though the means of effecting it were still visionary as before. It occurred to her, however, that under the plea of illness, she might possibly obtain permission to quit her chamber, and partake of occasional air and exercise; and, though doubtful of success, she

she determined to endeavour to gain this indulgence. The next visit, therefore, which she received from Marguerite, Adelaide spoke to her on the subject; and observed with satisfaction (her former doubts relative to Marguerite having wholly subsided) that she not only agreed to propose, and enforce the necessity of it, to her husband, but also accepted the office with much cheerfulness.

Although in applying for this permission, Adelaide had no expectation, in the hope of obtaining it, of its affording her any opportunity of flight, yet, she imagined that if her request was complied with, she might perhaps be thereby enabled hereafter, to prosecute

her

her meditated plan with greater facility, from the knowledge of the surrounding grounds in which she might be suffered to walk; and even, should the limits prescribed to her preclude her from gaining much advantage in this way, she considered that the benefit her health would probably derive from it would render her more equal to her projected undertaking. The return of Marguerite she now, therefore, anxiously awaited; and when she at length appeared, and communicated the acquiescence of Durand, Adelaide received the intelligence with an emotion of pleasure, such as she could scarcely have supposed the occasion would have afforded her; and which, had Marguerite been inclined to be mistrustful, would

certainly

certainly have excited her suspicion. Happily however for Adelaide, it appeared not to have had this effect; and, while the reflection of a moment convinced her of the impolicy of suffering her feelings thus to appear, she gladly accepted the proposal of Marguerite to avail herself of the indulgence allowed her, and, resolving to be more circumspect before Durand than she had been in the presence of his wife, for the first time since her imprisonment, she now quitted her gloomy apartments.

Preceded by Marguerite, Adelaide traversed the picture gallery, descended the stair-case, and passed through the vaulted passage, and the chambers occupied by Durand and his family, into the kitchen

kitchen where they usually sat; and where Durand, Josephine, with Robert, (whom Adelaide had not as yet seen; and who, having been sent by his father to the cottage near Coutances, there to dispose of their effects, had only lately returned from thence to their present abode,) were assembled. At the entrance of Adelaide, Josephine rose to meet her; and, having been informed of the permission which the former had obtained, offered to attend her in her walk.

Justly concluding that she would not be suffered to pass the walls of her prison alone, Adelaide readily accepted the company of Josephine, greatly preferring her to the others of her family; but,

but, whether it was his prisoner, or his daughter, that Durand mistrusted, he would not allow them to go on until the return of Robert, who had quitted the kitchen, and by whom, on his re-entrance, Adelaide had the mortification of finding she was to be also accompanied. In silence, and leaning on the arm of Josephine, she now, therefore, followed her conductor, who passed on through several chambers and passages into a hall, which they crossed toward a small door, and which being unlocked, disclosed an extensive piece of ground, enclosed on all sides by high walls. It had once been a garden; but the flowers and shrubs were now closely intermingled with the fox-glove, the thistle, and the nettle; and in all excepting one

one side which Durand had cleared for the culture of a few vegetables, the paths were overgrown with weeds, and scarcely discernible. Aware of the attention with which she expected her companions to observe her, and with which, in reality, her new conductor did so, Adelaide forebore to express the disappointment she felt at not being suffered to extend her walk further, although the air of desolation and singular wildness that characterized the place, in which, "the long grass waved "to the lonely gale," might sufficiently have accounted for her repugnance to continuing there, had not her real motive for wishing to go beyond these dreary walls rendered her fearful of exciting a suspicion of it. But, though the

the hopes she had formed were thus defeated as effectually as if her detainers had been acquainted with her thoughts, the freshness of the open air was a luxury to her, who had so long been restricted from the enjoyment of it, to which she could not be wholly insensible; and had not the inquisitive glances of Robert, who continued to walk within a few paces of her, been a restraint highly distressing to her feelings, she would have felt reluctant to attend the summons she at length (with the information of her dinner being served) received from Marguerite.

She now, however, willingly returned to the house; and while Josephine and her brother remained in the kitchen,

Adelaide

Adelaide was conducted back to her apartments by Marguerite; who, having secured the door, again withdrew.

The remainder of the day passed with Adelaide as usual; and no extraordinary occurrence marked the ensuing morning till she was surprised by the entrance of Marguerite, with an inquiry of whether she chose to take another walk; to which, in the hope of obtaining more liberty hereafter, by an appearance of being satisfied with that already allowed her, as well as to recruit her strength, Adelaide replied in the affirmative.

As she had been on the preceding day, she was now conducted by Marguerite,

rite, until she reached the kitchen; from whence, as before, she proceeded to the garden, accompanied also by Josephine and Robert. If the looks of the latter had before been unpleasant to her, they were now infinitely more so. A degree of impertinent familiarity marked his countenance; and though he spoke but little, and that that little was merely officious civility, yet Adelaide felt so embarrassed by his looks and manner, which her silence and the air of dignity she assumed could not repress, that after having walked for scarcely more than a quarter of an hour, she returned to the house and to her chamber. Unwilling to subject herself to the rude presumption of Robert, to whom she could not have objected with-

out incurring the ill-will of the family, she felt a degree of satisfaction when the badness of the weather, during the following and several succeeding days, prevented her from quitting the house, and left her the preferable solitude of her apartments, in which no one ever intruded, except at the accustomed hour of bringing her different meals. These were occasionally brought by Marguerite and her daughter, and at times, by the latter alone; when it required indeed no slight effort of self-command in Adelaide to refrain from availing herself of the desire to assist her, into which she construed the peculiar expression that frequently appeared in the countenance of Josephine; till a circumstance occurred, which proved

her

her forbearance to be its own reward, and, that her situation did not, in reality, excite the anxiety she had fondly imputed to it.

It happend one evening, that, after having waited nearly an hour beyond the usual time of receiving it, her supper was at length brought by Marguerite, who was also accompanied by Josephine; when, the evening being cold, Adelaide desired that more wood might be brought. Kneeling for a moment on the hearth, Marguerite thought she perceived a spark of light, which, with her hand, she gently fanned, till, spreading amongst the embers, it enabled her to light the lamp which still remained in the chimney from the preceding

ceding night. Having effected this, she desired her daughter to take the light and fetch the wood; but it was not until this had been twice repeated, that Josephine prepared to obey; when, taking the lamp from Marguerite, she moved a few steps toward the door, and then refused to proceed farther unless accompanied by her mother. "Foolish girl!" exclaimed Marguerite, "it would serve you right to make you go; but come—give me the light." Saying this, she snatched the lamp from Josephine, and quitted the chamber, leaving her with Adelaide, who, thinking the girl to blame, did not scruple (as the subject did not relate to herself, to reprove her gently for her disobedience.

"Dear

"Dear Ma'amselle," said Josephine, "indeed I do not often disobey my mother; but—to go by myself, at *this* hour—I could not do it, indeed, Ma'amselle."

"Why, my good girl," asked Adelaide, smiling at the simplicity of her manner; "what do you fear at this particular hour, more than at any other?"

"Dear Ma'amselle! how can you ask me, when you know I must have gone all through the gallery by myself," said Josephine, who, while she spoke, had quitted her station near the door, and crept round to the side where Adelaide sat. "Besides, Ma'amselle—" she continued, "—but—perhaps you do

do not know, and I ought not to tell you."

"I certainly do not know what you can mean," replied Adelaide, nor can I suppose that there is—."

"O! Ma'amselle, pray speak softly; it's true, indeed it's true, for my father told me so, Ma'amselle; and I would not go through the gallery by myself at night—no, not for all the world!"—

"But you do not say why, Josephine," said Adelaide, who now became anxious to learn the cause of the anxiety, which, as the moon-beams shone through the casements, she perceived strongly depicted on the features of the girl.

"Oh!

"O! Ma'amselle, why did you not observe the great folding doors at the end of the gallery?"

"No, but proceed," said Adelaide, willing to hear further.

"Well then, Ma'amselle, those great folding doors lead to the chambers that are. . the chambers, Ma'amselle, that are . . . . haunted, Ma'amselle," she at length added in a whisper.

"I thought you had some such cause for your alarm," answered Adelaide, "but your father must have been joking, and you should not give credit to such idle tales." Josephine remained silent; and the curiosity of Adelaide being

being now satisfied, she began to recollect that this conversation had already greatly exceeded the prescribed bounds, and forebore therefore to prolong it. Although, while listening to the simple relation of Josephine, she had thus endeavoured to rally her fears, yet, when Marguerite had returned with the wood, and again withdrawn with her daughter, Adelaide was not wholly free from sensations of a similar nature; and, left once more to her own reflections, she felt a degree of dread stealing over her own imagination, such as she had never before experienced, and which seemed to set reason at defiance.

The blazing faggots on the hearth had for

for some moments served to dissipate the gloom with which twilight had long since over-spread her chamber; but, as the light branches now quickly consumed, she perceived, that the larger logs were too green to kindle; and as darkness, in the present state of her spirits, rendered silence and solitude peculiar unpleasant, she began to repent the good-nature which had prompted her to permit Josephine to take away the lamp. She endeavoured however, by reflection, to combat and conquer these vague apprehensions; yet, as she looked fearfully through the dismal obscurity of her chamber, which the black furniture and ceiling of carved cypress wood did not tend to enliven, she found her spirits unequal to the endeavour;

endeavour; and though she soon retired to her bed, a thousand shapeless terrors rose to her imagination, and, during many hours, she continued sleepless and watchful.

The morning dawn recalled her, however, from the uneasy dreams into which she had at length sunk, to a sense of shame at having yielded to the apprehensions by which they were occasioned; and as she raised her thoughts in prayer, her mind recovered its strength, and she looked forward to the future with confidence and even hope.

Mistrustful, however, of herself, she endeavoured, by amusing her fancy, to prevent

prevent its recurring to this superstitious subject; and, from her casement, she looked out upon the distant mountains, whose tops, peeping over each other, faded from the eye in misty hues, while the vallies below were hid from the sight by the extensive woods which seemed to encircle the building, and which were still partially enriched by the golden tints of autumn. While her attention was thus occupied, Marguerite entered with the morning's repast, and Adelaide hastily turned from the window, fearful of exciting any suspicion with regard to her design of escaping, which she could not resolve wholly to relinquish, though as yet nothing had occurred likely to favour its execution; and even the hope of finding

an asylum in the distant edifice, no longer remained; for, as the trees which had formerly shrouded it from her view, were now nearly despoiled of their foliage, she distinctly perceived that this building was but the remains of what it once had been; and that a tower, containing the window on which the refraction of the sun's rays had first attracted her observation, appeared the only part that remained entire, of what she conjectured to have been a monastery.

CHAP. V.

My tongue hath but a heavier tale to say.
SHAKSPEARE.

It was toward the evening, when Adelaide having occasion to open the chest in which she had deposited the few changes of apparel, which, together with a note, had formerly been sent to her by the Baron, perceived, as she accidentally touched the bottom, that it was loose; and, more from the want of occupation than the idea of making any useful discovery, she emptied the

chest of its contents, and endeavoured, by pulling a ribbon which had originally served for that purpose, but was now nearly worn away, to draw up what she found to be a false bottom.

Having at length, with some difficulty, effected this, she looked into it; but finding it contained only a few fragments of paper, was preparing to replace the bottom, when, glancing her eyes a second time toward the interior of the chest, she perceived, in one of the corners, a key, which having been partly hid amongst the papers, she had not at first observed.

Taking it up, she found it to be entirely covered with rust; but, judging by its size, that it must belong to some

some chamber door, she secured it in her pocket, and, having replaced the bottom, closed the chest, just as Marguerite entered with wood and a lamp for the night. After renewing the fire, she, however, soon withdrew; and Adelaide, having heard her lock the chamber doors on the outside, listened for some moments to her retreating steps, till silence again ensued; when, taking the key from her pocket in all the eagerness of expectation, she applied it to the lock of the anti-chamber door, but it refused to yield; she, however, passed on to the door of the bed-chamber in the hope of better success, though ineffectually; and almost hopelessly she applied it to the second door, which, to her infinite satisfaction, she perceived

it to fit, though the rust prevented it from turning, and, after many efforts, she was compelled to return with it to the fire-side, where she spent some hours in endeavouring to restore it to a smooth state; but restrained, by the fear of being discovered, from exploring beyond her own apartments, till such time as she judged the family would be in bed, she regretted not the time thus occupied; and having at length succeeded in cleaning it from the rust, with a cautious hand she once more applied the key to the second door; which, yielding, disclosed a spacious and lofty chamber, furnished nearly as those she occupied, and the ceiling loaded with the massy compartments of the last age. Determined, if possible, to penetrate farther, she

she stepped lightly through, and gently drawing back a bolt, by which alone a door on the opposite side was secured, passed along a gallery terminated by a stair-case, beyond which appeared another wide gallery with several doors on each side.

Uncertain which way to chuse, she paused in deliberation; till, considering that it was most essential to ascertain whether the stair-case led to any entrance, by which, at a future time, she might effect her escape, she softly descended it, and found herfelf in a large vaulted hall. Holding her lamp on high, she looked fearfully through the gloom, and perceiving, on the opposite side, a low arched door open, she

crossed

crossed lightly and swiftly toward it, for the lonely aspect of the place awed her, and she started at the echo of her own steps. Beyond this door, she passed onward through a suite of apartments, the furniture of which was in the same style of gloomy grandeur as in all she had seen in the Chateau, but covered with dust, and in several places dropping to pieces with decay and damp.

Perceiving, however, that beyond the most interior of the chambers she could not penetrate, she turned to quit them, intending to return into the hall by which she had entered, and where she hoped to discover some avenue that might lead to an entrance; but while she

now,

now, therefore, stepped thoughtfully along, and reflected with an emotion of melancholy awe how many years had probably elapsed since these deserted apartments, where every object seemed to bear evidence of abandonment and desolation, had been inhabited, she suddenly fancied that she heard a low moaning sound. Pausing in alarm she listened for some moments, and looked fearfully around; but the silence that again prevailed left her unable to determine whether the sounds were real, or that the tone of her spirits, from the subject she had been considering, had given ideal ones to her imagination; the strong probability of the latter, however, induced her still to proceed; and blushing at the weakness of her terrors,

terrors, she continued to traverse an apartment which had formerly been a library, though now nearly despoiled of its contents, when her attention was arrested by a few books which still remained on the lower shelves; and, stooping to examine them, she found among them some volumes of the best Italian poets, which collecting together, she resolved to convey to her chamber, to beguile the tedious hours of imprisonment that might yet await her. While thus busily occupied, a repetition of the sounds again alarmed her; and recollecting, that, by its situation, this was probably one of the chambers said to be haunted, a sudden and unconquerable terror seized her, and snatching up her lamp, she rushed with

precipitation

precipitation from the library, and stopped not until she had ascended the staircase; when, breathless and exhausted, she was compelled to recover herself by the pause of a few moments. As she leaned against the rails, and her agitation, gradually subsiding, left her more at liberty to reason on the probability of circumstances, she began however to blame herself for the aptitude of her fears, and to believe that her ear had been deceived by the wind, whose low sounds crept at intervals through the gallery; but while she imagined herself thus convinced, she yet felt it impossible to explore any further at present. On returning to her chamber, she secured the key in her pocket, resolving, on the following night, to dis-

cover whither the other passages led, and to arm herself with sufficient resolution to enable her to conquer whatever superstitious terrors might again assail her. Thus determined, she retired to rest; and though her slumbers were broken and disturbed, day-light at length reanimated her spirits, and she awaited with impatience till night should return and enable her to execute her intentions.

Slowly, and unmarked by any new occurrence, the hours successively elapsed, and it was now past midnight, when, having newly trimmed her lamp, and concluding that the inhabitants of the Castle had long since retired to rest, she again prepared to quit her chamber. Softly

Softly unlocking the door, she proceeded with light and hasty steps through the adjoining apartment and gallery, while the feeble glimmering of the lamp she bore, served only to shew the surrounding gloom, and the strong current of air threatened to extinguish it. Notwithstanding the resolution she had determined to exert, the deserted appearance and deep silence that prevailed in this part of the building appalled her; and, on reaching the staircase, she hesitated whether or not to proceed; but the feeling was transient; and the consideration of the advantage which might possibly accrue from it, by facilitating her escape at some future moment, determined her to advance. Descending the stair-case, she again reached

ed the hall, which she now, more deliberately than on the preceding night, surveyed. It was lofty, and of an amazing extent. The roof rose in the centre into a dome, supported by pillars of black marble; and the floor (like that of the hall by which she had first entered the castle) was inlaid with the same substance. The windows were high and gothic; and corresponding to them, on the other side, appeared several arches, whose dark shade wholly obscured the extent beyond. Irresistibly awed by the loneliness of the hour, and the air of gloomy solemnity that characterized the place, she again paused; but, after a momentary hesitation, she crossed the hall toward the arches, from whose

vacuity

vacuity the sound of her light steps returned in whispering echoes, and perceiving, as her lamp shot its faint rays through the darkness, that the centre arch opened into a passage, she hastily turned into it. Several doors appeared on the right hand; but she continued to advance, till the passage was at length terminated by one which resisted all her efforts to unclose, and compelled her to return. As she again passed along, she, however, tried the different doors; and one, at length, having yielded, she entered an apartment, and had nearly traversed another, before she perceived them to be the same she had visited on the preceding night. A wish that she had not ventured hither stole over her heart; but, determined

termined to resist that propensity to fear which long anxiety had occasioned in her mind, she resolved not to quit the apartments without having proceeded to the library for the books she had already selected, but, in her agitation, neglected to bring away.

Although she thus endeavoured to tranquillize her spirits, while hurrying through the chambers that led to the library, yet, as she entered this apartment, and fearfully surveyed its dark extent, through which the rays of her single lamp scarcely half penetrated, they again faltered; and the deep silence that pervaded it, heightened, to her fancy, its gloomy aspect.

Ashamed

Ashamed of the weakness, which she could not, however, wholly subdue, she went forward to the side where she had left her books; and, hastily collecting them, turned to quit the library, when all her terrors were most powerfully removed by a deep and heavy groan, that, while it vibrated to her heart, seemed to suspend all her reasoning faculties. A pause of silence ensued; but while she still leaned against the wall for support, shrinking almost from herself, and scarcely venturing to breathe, or raise her eyes from the ground, the groan was again repeated; and presently, in a hollow tone which seemed to issue from the earth, a voice exclaimed, "Murder! murder! the spirit of the dead shall haunt the guilty murderer till vengeance overtake him!"

Something too weighty to describe or endure, now equally deprived Adelaide of the power of motion and utterance. A damp chill came over her; her sight became confused, and she dropped senseless on the floor.

CHAP. VI.

—" It came o'er my soul as doth the thunder,
While distant yet, with an unexpected burst,
It threats the trembling ear.—"

CARACTACUS.

AFTER having long remained in a state of insensibility, Adelaide at length began to revive; and raising her head from the floor, on which she had fallen, she looked wildly for some moments round the apartment, for her ideas were still confused and imperfect; but, as with returning animation she gradually recovered her recollection, the remem-

brance of the late extraordinary circumstance had nearly deprived her of it a second time; and such faintness and terror again overwhelmed her, that she again sunk upon the floor.

Her senses, however, had not forsaken her; and anxious to quit the scene of such alarm, for her spirits were now in such a state of weakness that she expected every moment to see some horrible object appear, with a degree of strength which fear enabled her to exert, she at length arose; but as she moved, she stumbled over something at her feet, and perceived by the moonlight that gleamed faintly through the high windows, that it was her lamp, which in her fall had been extinguished; she

she stooped to pick it up, when in the next moment a heavy cloud was driven over the moon, and the apartment suddenly involved in darkness. Equally fearing to remain as to venture forward, in vain she strained her sight through the gloom that surrounded her to discover the door by which she had entered; but, unable to distinguish any object, she was compelled to remain till the planet again emerged, when, with a palpitating heart, she quickly traversed the library and adjoining chambers.

Terror had, however, so powerfully assailed her, that at each step she took, she started at ideal sounds; and, as she entered the great hall, and, throwing a

fearful glance around its gloomy extent which the moon-beams but partially enlightened, beheld the gigantic shadows of the pillars stretched across the checquered pavement; her apt fears almost imagined a form gliding behind them, her heart trembled, and with a sort of desperate resolution she hurried forward, lest some new circumstance should increase her terrors and subdue the little strength she yet retained. Every thing, however, remained still. The dead silence of solitude was alone interrupted by the sound of her own steps; and she at length reached her chamber, where for a moment she felt herself in comparative safety; but this feeling was transient; the apprehensions which had been awakened were not of a

nature

nature to be easily subdued; and while, with that acuteness of perception which marks a disturbed imagination, she surveyed her dismal chamber, her feeble frame still shivered with horror and affright.

Ideas crouded so rapidly on her mind, that it was not for a considerable time that she could arrange them so as to form any thing like reasoning; and when she at length effected this, it afforded her no consolation, for a variety of extraordinary and disgusting conjectures still perplexed her.

Although on the preceding night she had yielded to a supposition of the sound which had then alarmed her

being imaginary, occasioned by the wind as it murmured through the long passages, what she had now heard no longer suffered her to entertain a doubt of its reality; and though the strength of her understanding had till lately, when extreme anxiety seemed to have weakened its powers, rendered her incredulous to every kind of superstition, yet her imagination, thus elevated by wonder and painful curiosity, could now no longer resist its influence, and reflection served only to increase the feelings of awe and dread with which her mind was impressed.

Wholly incapable of seeking repose in the present agitation of her spirits, she sat motionless in a window-seat where

where she had placed herself on her entrance, while with superstitious weakness she kept her eyes fixed on the door through which she had passed, till the light tints of dawn began to steal upon the night-shade, and distinctly shew the objects by which she was surrounded; when, somewhat re-assured, she ventured to lay down in her clothes, resolving, however, not to yield to sleep; but exhausted nature soon overcame this determination, and it was not until long after her accustomed hour that she awoke in the morning.

From the most disturbed and agonizing dreams she was at length recalled by a loud knocking at the door of the anti-chamber; and, as still trembling

from the visions of her sleep she started from her pillow, a remembrace of the extraordinary incidents of the preceding night struck suddenly upon her heart; and, faint through terror, she remained for some moments unconscious that it was the voice of Josephine which solicited admittance; when, however, she perceived it to be such, she rose with alacrity to admit her, glad to obtain a temporary relief from her own reflections, which her mind had not yet sufficiently recovered from its late shock to endure. Had not the attention of Josephine been pre-occupied by some interests of her own, the pale and affrighted countenance of Adelaide, which clearly evinced the agitation under which she laboured, could not

have escaped her notice; but happily she passed quickly into the interior chamber without observing it; and while she remained there, Adelaide had leisure to consider the consequences which might ensue from communicating to this girl the incomprehensible occurrence which still thrilled her nerves with horror; since, however strongly urged to do so, it was beyond the limits of probability that any entreaties, any inferior consideration would restrain Josephine from disclosing it to her father, should her attendance in this part of the Castle be still required; and, although Adelaide was strongly impelled to seek the relief which an over burdened mind finds in speaking of the subject that affects it, yet the dread of Durand's

gain intelligence of her having quitted her apartments, was too powerful to suffer her to hazard it; and she endeavoured therefore to arm herself with sufficient resolution to observe a profound silence on the subject.

Once more left alone, however, her spirits sunk at the prospect of again sleeping so near the suite of apartments which the terrors of Josephine had first taught her to dread terrors which she had then rejected, but to which her mind now but too easily responded; and she shuddered at the thought that no alternative remained for her but to continue in it, or hazard incurring suspicions which might eventually prove an obstacle to the only plan to which

she

she could now look forward with any degree of hope.

Thus compelled to endure an evil from which she perceived no means of escape but by subjecting herself to the probability of a still greater, she endeavoured to tranquillize her mind; but it refused controul, and her hours slowly elapsed in anxiety and watchfulness.

From the incidents of the preceding night, her thoughts at length reverted to the terrible scene of which she had been a spectator in the woods of St. Pierre; and while the conjecture (extraordinary as it was) impressed her with a degree of horror and awe that

seemed to bind up all her faculties beyond the power of action, she felt strongly disposed to believe that these circumstances were connected with each other; for, although her mind in its usual state was highly superior to the general influence of superstition, yet the terrors to which it now yielded were justified by circumstances of no common nature, but were such as even acquired additional force (prepared as she was for something above the reach of common conjecture) from the principle which taught her to believe in the possibility of all things; and while her ideas thus wavered between the suggestions of reason and the illusions of an imagination inflamed beyond the power of dispassionate reflection, the mysteri-

ous

ous voice seemed still, in hollow accents, to vibrate on her ear; and the scene she had witnessed in the woods seemed again present, its horrors aggravated by the consideration of the sufferings which must have been endured by the unfortunate victim, whom her harassed fancy now pictured wounded and bleeding to death beneath the dagger of an assassin! Recoiling from a subject on which she could not endure to pause, her thoughts however passed to others scarcely less terrible, and she sickened at the dreadful consideration of being herself, at this very moment, in the power of a man whom she had such formidable cause to from dread the conviction of his having been an accomplice in this diabolical act.

Under

Under such a conviction, it is not surprising that her mind no longer possessed the power of self-command; and that rash, and even impracticable, as in a calmer moment the undertaking had appeared to her, her thoughts again glanced toward an escape from the Castle as to the only prospect of safety that now remained for her.

Unable, however, to form any immediate determination on the subject, she continued still to deliberate on the means of effecting her design, till her reverie was interrupted by the entrance of Marguerite, whose looks and manner seemed to indicate something extraordinary. The former tranquillity of her countenance was gone; and while, contrary

trary to her usual custom, she loitered about the room in seeming occupation, the look of mingled pity and apprehension with which she occasionally regarded Adelaide, awakened equally her surprise and curiosity; but she dared not inquire its meaning; and Marguerite at length retired. Long after she had withdrawn, however, the extraordinary expression of her features continued to occupy the attention of Adelaide; and, as she again mentally considered it, and sought to develope its character, it now appeared to her harassed fancy to have indicated a desire of imparting some important intelligence which she regretted the not having encouraged. Her design of attempting to escape was, however, more than ever strengthened

by

by this surmise; and she resolved when night should return, and the inhabitants of the Castle be at rest, to endeavour by some expedient to effect an escape from her chamber-window; and although she had formerly considered them as of too serious a nature to be voluntarily encountered, yet her dread of remaining in the Castle would not now suffer her to look impartially on the dangers that might await her without, on the fatigue she must endure, nor on the difficulty of exploring her way through a country with which she was not only wholly unacquainted, but ignorant also whether it contained a single individual willing to assist her; and so trivial did these circumstances appear, when compared with the terrors of

of her present situation, that in the prospect of quitting it she could only anticipate the joy of freedom.

Having at length devised a means of reaching the ground from the window of her anti-chamber, and having prepared the small package she purposed taking, she seated herself, as usual, at her casement; from whence she continued to watch the gradual (though to her anxious fancy tardy) approach of evening, and impatiently count the deep tones of the Castle clock as it struck the succeeding hours; and, as her mind was now somewhat more tranquil from the hope of a speedy liberation, she beguiled the tediousness of time by arranging

arranging in her thoughts the plan she meant to pursue. This was, to endeavour to find her way through the woods and across the heath she had traversed with Durand, which she hoped the traces of his horse would enable her to do; and, as she recollected having had a distant sight of a village, she trusted also that Providence would assist her to reach it; and from thence she would seek an asylum in any neighbouring Convent, where she would remain until she had received the advice of Mr. de Chalambourg, the gentleman to whom her aunt had directed her to apply on any emergency.

While her thoughts were thus occupied,

pied, and her attention absorbed, a heavy storm, which had long been gathering, still unnoticed by her continued to approach; till at length a violent flash of lightning, almost instantly followed by tremendous thunder, suddenly roused her, and, rising from her seat, she withdrew to another; but the almost total darkness in which, during the intervals between the flashes, her chamber was now involved, recalled fearful thoughts; and, unable to subdue the terrors which rose to her fancy, she soon returned to her station at the window, from whence, with awful admiration and thankfulness for being in shelter, she continued to watch the scene without as the lightning blazed

over

over the woods, sometimes revealing their nearer recesses or displaying some opening in their summits, and illuminating the ground beneath with partial splendor, while the quickly succeeding thunder reverberated from the neighbouring mountains, making the intervals of silence appear more solemn.

While she thus sat, the Castle clock struck; and with surprise she perceived it to be an hour later than the time at which her supper was usually brought, though as yet neither Josephine nor her mother had appeared; and, as from their accustomed punctuality, the present delay excited her wonder, the recollection of Marguerite's looks and manner rendered it also a subject of uneasiness and anxious conjecturing.

At length, after raging for a considerable time, the violence of the tempest began to abate; the lightning became less vivid and less frequent; and the thunder, rolling away into distance, was now only faintly heard; but the wind, which had seemed to drive the storm before it, still howled in violent gusts among the trees, and the hail and rain still descended in torrents from the dark clouds which yet encumbered the atmosphere, and between which a few stars were occasionally seen to twinkle. Mean-time, the extraordinary absence of her attendants still perplexed the harassed mind of Adelaide; and the apprehensions it excited (apprehensions which reflection

reflection served only to increase) obliterated for a while the superstitious terrors which had before assailed her.

CHAP. VII.

—My list'ning pow'rs
Were awed, and ev'ry thought in silence hung
And wond'ring expectation.

AKENSIDE.

WHILE Adelaide thus anxiously awaited the return of Josephine, she suddenly fancied, during a momentary pause of the wind, that she distinguished a noise of horses' feet; but the sounds were again quickly sunk in the returning blast; and as for information she again looked from her window on the scene without,

without, she could now only imperfectly discern the faint outline of the woods and distant hills, while above, heavy clouds, borne along the wind, seemed to mingle with the stars, and wrap the night in thicker darkness. Presently however, a clattering of hoofs became distinct; and while attentively listening she leaned from her open casement, she now also heard voices from the lawn beneath, though the wind prevented her from distinguishing the words; and soon the echoing sound of the great hall doors, as they were opened and shut with violence; after which, silence again prevailed, and in solitude and darkness she continued to ruminate on this new occurrence.

From

From the reverie which engaged her she was at length roused by the sound of approaching steps, and in the next instant a ray of light glimmered under the door, which was soon opened by Josephine.

"Where have you been so long?" demanded Adelaide, "and what has occasioned you to stay till this late hour?"

"It was not my fault, Ma'amselle;" answered Josephine, as she placed the supper she had brought on a table, "but I hope, Ma'amselle, you were not frightened at the storm? how the thunder did roar! and what terrible lightning! I never hardly was so terrified in all my life."

"It was a very violent storm indeed; but tell me," said Adelaide, "who were the horsemen who arrived in the midst of it?"

"I can't tell you any thing about it, Ma'amselle; I don't know—I must not indeed, Ma'amselle," replied Josephine, while she hastily lighted the lamp and re-kindled the fire, which had for some hours been extinguished; "pray don't ask me, Ma'amselle," she continued, perceiving that Adelaide was about to speak, "for I can't, indeed I can't tell you. Do you want any thing more before I go, Ma'amselle?"

"No;" answered Adelaide, "but I should have been glad if you would have.—"

"Dear

"Dear Ma'amselle, don't be displeased; but, indeed I must not—I dare not tell you. Good night, Ma'amselle."

"Good night, Josephine!" said Adelaide; but Josephine heard her not, for she had already quitted the chamber, and the echoes of her light quick steps were soon sunk in distance.

Once more left to her own reflections, the extraordinary and confused manner in which this girl had evaded replying to her interrogation afforded Adelaide new cause for conjecture; but as she had no means of obtaining any explanation of the mystery, and as the present state of her spirits disposed her to consider every new occurrence for which

she could not account as an additional subject of alarm, she mused upon it long in uneasiness and doubt.

That the strangers, whosoever they were, had been expected at the Castle, appeared evident from the ready admission they had obtained; and this conclusion inclined her to believe the Baron to be one of them; since, during the whole period of her imprisonment, she had never had reason to suppose that any other persons than the family of Durand had entered the Castle; nor, from the circumspection which the conduct of this man toward herself must render it necessary for him to adopt, was it probable that he would hazard admission of any stranger. She doubted

not, therefore, (since who else could it be?) that the Baron de Bertonville was himself within the walls; though, whether to deduce comfort from this belief, or consider it as a new cause for apprehension, she remained for some moments incapable of determining; till at length that propensity to hope which "buoys up the human heart" suggested that remorse of conscience might perhaps prompt him to this visit in order to silence its remonstrances; or a wish of entering into a compromise with her, either to restore her to liberty, or place her in a convent, on condition of her resigning in his favor her claims to the property of her late aunt; and while, without deliberately examining its grounds, she thus soothed herself

with this explanation of a circumstance which at first had excited very different emotions, she also yielded (forgetful of her former opinion on the subject) to the supposition that her present imprisonment might hitherto have been concealed from the knowledge of the public, and merely designed to intimidate and terrify her into acquiescence with the wishes of her uncle.

Under this persuasion, she expected every moment to see her chamber door open and the Baron enter; but still he came not; and, with the passing time, the faint hope which the surmise of his arrival had excited, and which she now felt she had been too sanguine in admitting, gradually diminished, and fear resumed its empire in her heart.

"If

"If it is really him," said she to herself, "and that his purpose is not evil, what can prevent him from seeing me? Wherefore should he delay it?"

While thus she reasoned, and remained in anxious suspence, still listening for his approaching footsteps, and often starting, as while she measured the chamber with unequal steps the old boards shook and groaned where she passed, the Castle clock struck one!

It was the hour on which she had quitted her chamber the preceding morning; and this remembrance, by recalling the terrific circumstance which had soon after occurred, awakened a

train of images she could not recollect without horror; and which, as they now again rose to her mind, appeared to give so frightful a colour to the character of the Baron, and of Durand, that her spirits sunk, and she could scarcely imagine that she could have been committed into the hands of the latter, unless for some desperate purpose; and although the consideration of the safety in which she had hitherto been suffered to remain, together with the assurances she had received of its continuance, at length somewhat relieved her mind, there were still too many circumstances to justify apprehension, while thus beyond the hope of succour, she remained in the power of persons whom she had such powerful

cause

cause to dread, and to believe capable of the most atrocious actions.

While these reflections occupied her mind, she now wóndered at the hopes she had so lately entertained; and as she considered that the present opportunity of escaping was perhaps the only one that might occur, she blamed herself for thus suffering the time to elapse in useless conjecture; and having softly opened her casement, she looked out; but the moon had not yet risen, and all without was silent and dark, excepting that which could scarcely be called light, and which was only the faint glimmering of the stars as they alternately twinkled and disappeared amid the heavy clouds with which, though

the rain had ceased, the heavens were still encumbered; and though but the preceding moment it had appeared so desirable, and to her alarmed fancy so essential to her safety to quit the Castle under any circumstances, yet, as through the obscurity she anxiously strained her sight, she felt that it would partake more of rashness than courage to venture leaving the Castle until the morning dawn should enable her to discern her path through the woods.

Under this conviction, she softly closed her casement, and returned to her seat by the hearth; but though she endeavoured to tranquillize her spirits, apprehension made her constantly listen for some sound, and often cast an

anxious

anxious glance round her chamber, where all, however, was lonely and still.

Absorbed in disquieting reflections, she continued to watch the expiring embers of her wood fire (for her lamp had long since been extinguished), and count the measured beat of the Castle clock from the great hall beneath her chamber, which alone interrupted the melancholy silence that prevailed; but she had not long continued thus, when suddenly she fancied that she heard a noise from the passage; and while she listened, endeavouring to persuade herself that it was only the wind, she now distinctly heard approaching footsteps; and on turning her eyes toward the

 door,

door, she observed a ray of light gleam from underneath it on the floor.

Every terrific circumstance now rushed to her imagination; she perceived that the steps had already reached the door; and in the next moment, while her heart sickened with apprehension, an attempt was made on the lock, and whispers were heard. The sounds returned at intervals; and the person who spoke, whoever it might be, seemingly restrained his voice from an apprehension of being overheard.

In a state of such intense and terrible expectation as she could not long have borne and retained her senses, she still listened; but though the voice became gradually

gradually louder, and repeated her own name, it was many minutes before her extreme agitation permitted her to distinguish it to be that of Josephine. When, however, she at length did so, with a sensation of indescribable relief she instantly went forward to remove the chest which apprehension had induced her to place against her door as an additional security; but a degree of mistrust, and perhaps discretion, impelled her again to pause on reaching the door until she should be more certain that it was Josephine alone who demanded admittance; of which being at length assured she removed the chest and drew back the bolts, when the door having been previously unlocked from without, Josephine entered. "O! Ma' amselle,"

'amselle," said she, as she stepped softly forward, "I have been so frightened lest I should have been overheard before you would let me in, and—"

"What is the matter?" interrupted Adelaide hastily, "for you have equally alarmed me by coming at this late hour."

"Dear Ma'amselle, I am sorry for it; but pray speak softly, and I will tell you all about it. You know, Ma'amselle, you asked me when I brought up your supper to-night who the strangers were who had arrived in the midst of the thunder storm; and as my father had desired me not to say any thing to you about it, you know, Ma'amselle, I re-

fused

fused telling you; but that's what I am now come about, for—"

Though as she stood with her back toward the door she understood not the cause of her alarm, Josephine suddenly stopped on observing the changing countenance of Adelaide; who, unable to speak, now caught her arm, and directed her attention toward the door, from behind which, as it was cautiously opened, appeared the tall figure of a man.

After a momentary pause, while breathless through terror and scarcely able to sustain herself Adelaide leaned for support on Josephine, the figure quickly advanced toward them.

"Be

" Be not alarmed, I beseech you ;" it said, " be not alarmed, for in me you behold a friend, ready to serve you to the utmost of his power ; but do you not know me ?"—

" Know you !" at length faintly repeated Adelaide, almost mistrusting the evidence of her senses, " is it possible that I see the Chevalier de Bellecourt ?"

" —And is it indeed possible," said he, in a voice tremulous through emotion, " that I have again the happiness of beholding you ?—but let me not waste these moments which are precious if they can enable me to serve you. —A most fortunate chance conducted me hither ;" he continued, " chance, did

did I say? No!—Providence surely directed my steps, that you might be restored to the living world; and I am impatient to fulfil its will. But you are silent. . . . surely you cannot doubt my intentions?"

"I do not, Chevalier," replied Adelaide, almost overcome by a variety of emotions, "but what would you propose?"

"That you should allow me to conduct you immediately from hence to some place of safety," he eagerly answered; "for each moment that you linger within these treacherous walls is to me an age of agony! You know not," he continued, after a short pause,

mis-

mistaking the occasion of her silence; "you know not the cause I have to dread each moment of delay, or you would not thus deliberate: but you shall judge for yourself.—This paper," drawing one from his pocket, "was dropped by the ruffian to whose custody you were committed, and fortunately picked up by my servant; listen to its vile purport."

Saying this, and taking the lamp from Josephine, he read as follows:—

'Circumstances have occurred since my last to you, which have determined me no longer to hazard a possibility of detection:——you understand me——death alone can secure to me the means

of

of rewarding your services; which doubt not but I will amply do as soon as this necessary measure is adopted; let not, therefore, any cowardly scruples deter you, but be speedy! Again I repeat, be speedy and secret! and though I feel assured that your attachment to me is sufficient to ensure your obedience, you will do well to remember some former transactions which might involve you in difficulties, were I ever as much disposed to become your enemy as I am now to befriend you.'

The voice of De Bellecourt faltered as he read, and with difficulty he finished the concluding sentence, while Adelaide shuddered as she listened.

"Let

"Let us depart!" she at length said, recovering her voice.

"Yes, let us instantly depart," repeated the Chevalier; "for though to my last gasp I would defend you, yet it were better to avoid than engage in contest."

"Oh, far better!" exclaimed Adelaide, sickening at the thought; "but how shall we effect . . . ."

"This girl has promised her assistance," he hastily interrupted, "on condition of accompanying us, therefore——"

"Yes, Ma'mselle," interrupted Josephine,

phine, who had hitherto remained silent, "I have the key of a door that will let us out; but pray make haste, and pray come as softly as you can, for if we are caught my father will surely kill me."

"Lead on then," said De Bellecourt, while taking the arm of Adelaide within his they hastened toward the door, of which, having locked it, Josephine secured the key, in order to delay a discovery of the truth, and with silent steps they passed along the gallery.

On reaching the staircase they stopped to listen, but all was still; and cautiously descending, they had nearly reached the bottom of the stairs, when the

the sound of footsteps suddenly alarmed them.

"Fear not," whispered de Bellecourt as he drew back, and with gentle violence withheld Adelaide from re-ascending, while Josephine, more prudent, endeavoured to conceal the light of the lamp: "fear not," he again repeated, "for be assured I will defend you."

Incapable of replying, Adelaide sighed deeply as he pressed her hand, and in trembling expectation listened for a return of the sounds, but they had ceased—not an echo wandered along the vaulted passage: and after the pause of a few moments, encouraged by the still-

ness

ness that prevailed, they at length descended, when at the instant they turned into the passage, and the light Josephine carried flashed faintly upon the opposite wall, they perceived the figure of a man stationed at a little distance against it.

To retreat unobserved was now wholly inpracticable, since their steps and the lamp must inevitably have already betrayed them. Convinced of this, de Bellecourt put one hand to his sword to prepare for defence, while with the other he supported Adelaide, who again trembling, shrunk back; when in the next moment his apprehensions were dispelled as the figure moved forward,

ward, and he perceived it to be his servant, whom he had left to keep watch in another place, but who, being alarmed for the safety of his master by the length of his absence, had, with imprudent zeal, quitted his post to seek him.

Relieved from the degree of alarm which this had at first occasioned, the Chevalier motioned to his servant, who would have spoken, to be silent and to follow him an order the man immediately obeyed; and taking a contrary direction from that which led to the apartments occupied by the family of Durand, with stealing steps they passed cautiously along this passage into another, which, with a quickened pace, they also tra-

traversed; and from whence, by a short flight of broken steps, they descended into a large vacant chamber.

At the entrance of this chamber they again stopped to listen, for the apt fears of Adelaide were again awakened, and she now fancied that she distinguished the sounds of pursuit; but the pause of a moment convinced her she had been deceived by the murmurs of the wind, as at intervals they echoed through the long passages she had quitted; and, released from this apprehension, with lighter steps they crossed toward a door on the opposite side; before, however, they had reached the centre of this chamber, which was of great extent, the lamp suddenly sunk in its socket; for a

moment it shot a tremulous gleam athwart the obscurity, and in the next expired. They had, nevertheless, had a sufficient view of the chamber to enable them to pass on toward the door; and as the accident was irremediable, and that Josephine assured them that another chamber and another short passage would conduct them to the gate of which she had the key, they hesitated not to proceed; but as they advanced, Adelaide was again alarmed on perceiving, through the door which stood a little way open, and allowed them a glimpse of the inner chamber, a faint light gleam from within it. On a nearer approach she however became convinced that her fears were groundless, for the rays were only those of the moon,

striking through opposite casements of the chamber; and with increased speed they proceeded through it, nor stopped until they reached a low arched gate which terminated the passage into which this chamber opened; when, with trembling hands, Josephine applied the key—the lock yielded—and grating heavily on its hinges, the gate opened upon the lawn.

The clouds of the late storm were now entirely dispersed, and the moon-light afforded a distinct view of the scenery; passing therefore under the shadow of the walls, till they reached the front of the Chateau, lest any suspicion should have roused its inhabitants, they crossed quickly toward the stables,

which were at some distance from the house, and where the horses of the Chevalier and his servant had been left.

As they now waited beneath the shade of trees which hid the stables from observation, while Francois cautiously led out the horses, the eyes of Adelaide and Josephine were fixed in anxious watchfulness on the Chateau, but neither sound nor appearance afforded them any reason to imagine their flight had as yet been discovered; and while the heart of Adelaide beat quickly with joy at this unlooked-for liberation, she mounted behind the Chevalier, on his horse, while Josephine was placed behind the servant on the other; and riding as fast as the checkered light

which

which the thick branches of the trees admitted, and the unevenness of the path would permit, they proceeded through the woods, from whence they at length emerged in safety, and entered the dreary common which, with far different sensations from those she now experienced, Adelaide had formerly traversed with Durand.

As their present mode of travelling was one which could not have been long continued without considerable fatigue to the females of the party, the Chevalier wished to procure a more eligible conveyance as soon as it was possible to do so; and having, though not without difficulty, at length tracked his way across the common, he struck into a

road which led toward Carentan, the place from whence he had set out on the preceding evening, when the storm compelled him to seek shelter in the Chateau, and which was now the nearest by many miles.

CHAP. VIII.

Soon as the fiery streaks, with purple beams,
Dispense the shadows of the misty night.

SPENCER.

It was not till long after the dawn of morning that the travellers at length reached Carentan, and stopped at the first inn at the entrance of the town, although it was one of the worst that it contained; ut as, previous to his arrival at the Chateau, the Chevalier had

spent some days in the place, and was known at the principal inn, where he had remained, he was unwilling to subject Adelaide to the remarks and notice which it is probable would have been excited, had she accompanied him thither, and he therefore judged it most adviseable to remain at this, until a chaise and horses, which this inn could not furnish them with, could be procured from another.

Apprehension, anxiety, and hope had so rapidly succeeded each other in the mind of Adelaide, whose awakened spirits could but ill sustain this sudden transition, that during the journey hither her thoughts were so confused, that she was scarcely sensible whether

what

what had happened was a reality, and whether she dared venture to believe herself safe from the Chateau; but the silence in which, each occupied by different reflections, the whole party had pursued their way, had contributed to soothe her agitation and promote reflection; and as the tumult of emotions which had passed in her bosom began at length to subside, she became more conscious of her situation, and in terms of the warmest gratitude she now thanked the Chevalier for her deliverance; a deliverance which, if an opinion might be formed from the sympathy expressed by his manner, afforded him at least nearly as much happiness.

While Francois was dispatched for the

carriage in which the travellers were to proceed, the Chevalier wished to persuade Adelaide to take some repose; but her mind was still too much occupied to suffer her to do so; for though, until now, her escape had alone dwelt on her thoughts, yet as reflection gradually recurred to her, the joy which the certainty of liberty had at first excited, was not wholly unmixed with anxiety, when she considered that she had no longer a home, nor friends to receive her; and that the only person who appeared to take an interest in her welfare, and her growing regard for whom seemed justified by the service he had rendered her, was one from whom propriety compelled her to separate; but however strongly opposed by inclination, the necessity of her doing

so

so was too evident to suffer her to hesitate on the subject; and she determined to withdraw to some convent where boarders were received, until such time as some arrangement had been made in her affairs that would enable her to choose either to continue there, or remove to any preferable situation.

While these reflections occupied her thoughts, the Chevalier interrupted her reverie, by recurring to her late situation at the Chateau, and inquiring how long she had been there; and having in reply given him a short account of the manner in which she had been conveyed thither, and the close confinement in which she had been kept, without, however, mentioning the mysterious and

dreadful transaction she had witnessed in the woods of the Chateau de Bertonville, and the subsequent alarm she had experienced in her late abode, incidents to which her mind could not revert without horror, and from the mention of which she felt powerfully and irresistibly restrained; she expressed the curiosity she felt to learn the circumstances which had so fortunately led him to the Chateau, and by what means he had discovered her being there.

"By a coincidence of circumstances the most fortunate for me that could occur," said the Chevalier; "for, from a state of wretchedness beyond description, have they restored me to life, to hope!" He checked the sentence that

hung upon his lips; and after a few moments of silence, "by circumstances, in themselves unimportant," he continued, "was I detained at this place during several days, until I sat out from hence, intending to visit many places on the coast, which I had not seen; though more from that restlessness which is ever attendant on a disturbed mind, than from the prospect of any satisfaction the journey could afford me; for of satisfaction my mind was then incapable. Absorbed in wretchedness, I pursued my way, heedless of the road, while my faithful Francois, in ignorance of the route I intended to take, followed in the silence he has of late been accustomed to preserve, till at length recovering my recollection, I perceived that

I had

I had wandered from my course, and was in the midst of the wide and dreary common we this morning traversed; but the circumstance which had roused me from my stupor, the most tremendous storm I ever recollect to have witnessed, impelled me rather to seek shelter than endeavour to regain the road I had quitted; shelter, from motives of humanity toward my companions, and the consciousness of the duty of self-preservation; for had I not been actuated by these considerations, the fury of the elements would, I then thought, have been mercy, had they terminated my wretched existence.

"I now, however, sought to discover some path likely to lead to shelter, for the

the violence of the storm continued with unabated vigour; and even our horses were now so much appalled, that it was with difficulty we forced them to proceed; while I thus looked around, I perceived by the glare of the lightning the turrets of a castle rising amidst the woods; and turning our horses into the path which presented itself, I perceived the building through the perspective of the trees, and with increased speed made toward it.

"On reaching the gates, it was not without reluctance the inhabitants granted me admission; a want of hospitality, for which I could not at the time account, but which is now fully explained: determined, however, not to return, I in-

I insisted on their affording the accommodation I required for myself, my servant, and the horses, and we were at length suffered to enter the house, where the courteous reception I met with from the females made me some amends for the brutal behaviour of the men.

"Having dried our clothes by the fire, and partaken of some refreshment, I was offered a bed for myself and another for my servant in the same apartment, and adjoining one in which the females were to pass the night, beyond which was the kitchen, where I found the men intended to sit during the night; an intention which inspired me with a degree of mistrust of my host, which his deportment did not tend to

dispel;

dispel; and as I noticed the mysterious manner in which he whispered to the rest of his family, I almost fancied I read murder written in legible characters on his ferocious countenance. In these suspicions, as I afterwards found, I was not singular; the same had occurred to my servant, and had fortunately induced him to an act which, under other circumstances, would have been unpardonable—the secreting a paper which fell accidently from the pocket of our host, and which, it fortunately occurred to him, might afford some seasonable intimation of the character of this rascal.

"On repairing to the chamber we were to occupy, I perceived the sudden con-

consternation which overspread the features of Francois, as, by the lamp they had left us, he read this paper; and before I could inquire its cause, he had already offered it for my perusal, urging me at the same time to escape, without loss of time, from a place of such danger; a conduct, I am assured, his affection for me alone could have induced him to propose; as, when I declared my intention of affording assistance to the prisoner to whom the letter related, he warmly seconded my plan, and indeed suggested the means of its accomplishment.

"The young girl who has accompanied us had, it appeared, availed herself of an opportunity of speaking to my servant,

servant, unobserved by any one, of some friend or lover to whom she wished him to convey a message without the knowledge of her father; and as the time did not permit her to say all she wished on the subject, it was agreed between them that she should repair through my chamber to the one beyond it; where, after I was in bed, and, as she supposed asleep, she was then to detail all the particulars of this message to Francois

"Briefly informed of this, I resolved to avail myself of it for the purpose I wished to effect; and having lain down in my clothes, I feigned sleep, while, according to the agreement, they passed through to the next chamber, where, by disclosing his knowledge of there being

being a person in the house under confinement, and threatening her with the assurance of communicating to her father what she had before told him, he terrified her into a promise of compliance with what I desired, on condition of being suffered to accompany us from the Castle, from which I had resolved not to depart, without having released the prisoner, for whose safety, with a strange and unaccountable presentiment, which, notwithstanding your supposed death, I could not dismiss from my mind of its being you, I felt far more anxious than for my own. What followed I need not relate, as you are equally informed of it; nor need I, I trust, repeat the happiness it gave me to be the means of your liberation."

"Nor

"Nor need I, I hope," said Adelaide, "repeat it, to induce you to believe the gratitude I feel for your generous interference. But you mentioned my death; is it possible that this belief is general?"

"Too possible, indeed," replied the Chevalier; "nor until this happy night did I entertain the slightest doubt of its sad reality! I was even taught to believe (for having known you, how could I suppose it otherwise)? I was taught to believe, that that disgrace to human nature, to cover whose lawless ambition and avarice you have been compelled to bear this unpardonable ill usage—this unparalleled outrage—that the villain mourned your loss with unfeigned sorrow. At the period when this

this event was supposed to have taken place," he continued after a momentary pause, " I was, with the regiment to which I belong, quartered at Arras, where the unwelcome intelligence reached me; but from whence I immediately set out, as it was then my turn for *semêstre*, at the earnest entreaty of my uncle, to join him in Paris.

" He was aware of the effect of his information, (for it was from him I learnt it), and kindly quitted his abode, from whence no slight occasion can withdraw him, to give me the meeting in the metropolis, amidst whose gaieties he believed the impression of sorrow would be more easily erased than in the retirement of his country house; but he

knew

knew not the depth of the wound he sought thus to cure; nor was his solicitude then repaid with the gratitude it deserved. The state of my mind rendered it incapable of exertion; and, unable to assume even an appearance of the tranquillity he so earnestly wished me to recover, restless and anxious for change, though scarcely knowing whither to bend my course, I suddenly determined on quitting Paris, a resolution that was scarcely formed ere it was executed.

"Leaving my uncle to return alone to his country residence, I sat out from the metropolis; and, accompanied by my faithful Francois, whom, to calm the anxiety of my worthy relative, I suffered to

to attend me, I travelled through various parts of the country, chance, rather than intention, guiding my steps; but no change of scenery had power to withdraw me from those recollections which, while they daily, hourly, increased my misery, I still felt a secret pleasure in indulging. All consciousness was lost in grief; grief the more poignant from being, as I then thought, wholly unavailing; but pardon this egotism, which has exceeded the bounds of toleration, and which must long since have exhausted your patience.,"

"Can you suppose that I could listen to an account of the interest you have taken in my welfare with any other sentiment than gratitude?" said Adelaide

at

at length, scarcely conscious of what she uttered; "do you believe that I could be so ungrateful as——"

"Talk not of gratitude," interrupted the Chevalier with strong emotion, "for is it not my own happiness that I have promoted, that I shall have renewed beyond all that I ever experienced, if I am allowed to hope that at some future period I may be permitted to sue for that regard—without which life will be insupportable!—At least impute not to me, an intention of offending you by this sudden disclosure of my sentiments," he resumed after a pause, during which Adelaide was still silent, "for believe me when I assure you that this declaration of a passion which has existed from the commencement of our acquaintance

has been wholly unpremeditated; nor will I hazard your displeasure by longer dwelling on the subject at this time, if I may only—"

The entrance of Josephine, who had hitherto been absent, but who now entered the chamber interrupted the discourse; but though this interruption deprived the Chevalier of the reply he had hoped to obtain from Adelaide, it prevented him not from reading with the quick sightedness of love, in her blushes and involuntary smile, the permission he so anxiously sought to obtain.

At this moment, however, the appearance of the carriages he had sent

for, and which Josephine had already, unheeded by Adelaide or the Chevalier, announced, reminded the latter that it had not yet been agreed whither Adelaide wished to be conveyed; and as he now made the inquiry, the reply he received deprived him of the anticipation of much satisfaction in escorting her for more than a few miles further, by informing him of the resolution she had formed of placing herself in a convent at the next large town they might reach; as in this, so near the scene of her imprisonment, (although within the walls of a monastery, she might have considered herself in safety,) she could not resolve to remain.

Against this determination, he re-

monstrated for some time ineffectually; till learning at length that she had really no friends with whom she could seek an asylum, nor home, until the possessions which were now withheld from her by the Baron should be restored to her, he informed her of a circumstance of which she had hitherto been ignorant, his having a sister lately become a widow, who with her young family resided in the neighbourhood of Orleans, and to whose abode he so earnestly besought her to remove, enforcing his entreaties by assurances of the welcome she would receive, and the pleasure it would afford his sister to offer an asylum, and contrasting the confidence and comfort which he hesitated not to affirm she would feel in

the society of the Comtesse D'Albec with what she could reasonably expect to experience amongst a set of people who were not only strangers to herself and her connections, but from whom (in order to avoid the intrusive curiosity which a knowledge of her situation would probably awaken) it would be necessary to conceal the circumstances which induced her to seek refuge amongst them; and strongly seconded as they were by her own inclination, Adelaide could not listen to his arguments without acknowledging their justness; yet while feeling their full force, she admitted this, delicacy and proper pride seemed to warn her against a conduct which might prove both humiliating and vexatious in its conse-

 quences;

quences; and the objections which reason exhibited were such as she could neither overcome nor disregard.

She considered that although the Chevalier was thus sanguine in his anticipation of the reception she would experience from his sister, it was possible that in this instance his wishes had led him into an error; that however strict an investigation her sentiments and motive for doing so would bear, the very circumstances of her having quitted her prison, and travelled so far with the Chevalier might subject her to censure, from the idea of which her mind recoiled with alarm, and might likewise impress the Comtesse D'Albec with a disadvantageous opinion of her; and

that

that even were this not to be the case, and allowing the probability of what the Chevalier had prognosticated, the recent loss his sister had sustained, and her consequent affliction, might render her unusually averse to the receiving a guest who was not only a stranger, but of whose arrival she had no previous intimation, to allow her the power of an alternative; and how, under these circumstances, could she endure to think even for a moment of intruding herself thus abruptly upon her! how could she resolve to encounter the uncertainty of her kindness!

While these considerations occupied Adelaide, the emotion they occasioned

did not escape the Chevalier's observation; and when from the hope which her appearance of deliberating excited, he repeated his arguments and renewed his entreaties, she candidly stated her objections, adding, that whatever probability of the contrary existed, her own dignity required that she should foresee, and guard against the worst possibilities. With increased admiration of the propriety and delicacy of her sentiments, he attended to her reasoning; but though the conviction of its justness withheld him from farther dissuasion, yet the thought of even a temporary separation from her who had but so lately been restored to him; the certainty of whose existence had thus

lately

lately reconciled him to his own, and whose assurances of gratitude had but a few moments since elevated his hopes to joy, to rapture, was too painful to suffer him to attend to the delicate scruples that bade him be silent on the subject; and while he forbore to oppose her determination, he now stipulated, that should his sister be as desirous of her society as his knowledge of her character authorised him to expect, Adelaide should remove from the convent to her abode; an arrangement to which, as it removed the objections which had alarmed her just delicacy, she was at length persuaded to consent; and having taken some slight refreshment, Adelaide and Josephine

phine entered the carriage, and, escorted by the Chevalier and his servant on horseback, took the road that led toward Bayeux.

CHAP. IX.

Now shine the spires beneath the paly moon,
And thro' the cloisters peace and silence reign;

DUNCOMBE.

AGITATED by a variety of considerations and contrary emotions, of which, however, those of joy and tenderness were the most predominant, Adelaide continued to travel for some miles without exchanging a word with her companion; who now that she had leisure for reflection, began to feel a degree of sorrow at having quitted her mother, and betrayed the confidence reposed in

her by her father, which had she experienced previous to quitting the Castle, might have proved fatal to the interests of Adelaide: yet the letter which had been dropped by Durand, and at the reading of which by the Chevalier, she had been present, awakened a degree of mistrust and horrible suspicion relative to her father, which while she shuddered at the thought of admitting, she still felt it impossible to reject; and which the recollection of various mysterious circumstances in his conduct that had lately occurred, and which at the time had excited much painful conjecture both to herself and her mother, served only, as they were now separately considered, to confirm these horrible suppositions; and as she surveyed

veyed Adelaide, she congratulated herself as her preserver, while the sorrow she experienced at the discovery of such intentional guilt in her parent, received much alleviation from the consciousness of having prevented him from its execution. The engaging manners of Adelaide had long since interested the benevolent feelings of Josephine; and although she had been taught to consider her as very unworthy of compassion, (for Durand, in order to avoid the remonstrances which a knowledge of the truth would have occasioned from his wife and daughter, had artfully imposed on their credulity by a fabricated and disadvantageous account of his prisoner,) she could not behold her thus young and lovely, pining away her existence

existence in confinement, without feeling the tenderest pity. The tale, however, she had been told by her father, and which she hitherto implicitly believed, she now began to doubt; and anxious to ascertain the truth, she at length broke silence, and ventured to inquire the occasion of Adelaide's having been brought to the Castle; and though the brief relation, which, after strictly enjoining her to secrecy during her residence in the convent, Adelaide gave in reply, did not tend to remove her suspicions relative to Durand, but on the contrary to augment them, it increased the satisfaction she experienced in the consciousness of the part she had acted toward her.

While

While the thoughts of Adelaide and her companion were thus occupied, the mind of the Chevalier was scarcely less agitated; but his were only pleasurable emotions. The clouds of misery which had so lately hung over his prospects had suddenly disappeared, and left them open to the sunshine of anticipated happiness; and in the fulness of present joy, he forgot that he had ever been unhappy; he forgot for a while the deep resentment and indignation with which the discovery of the Baron's conduct had fired his mind; he forgot the whole world—excepting Adelaide! and as in imagination he still beheld her beautiful countenance—still listened to her mild persuasive accents, and indulged the rapturous recollection of having

having rescued her from imprisonment, perhaps from death! he seemed to have arisen into a new existence; or rather, as if all that had passed was a delightful dream, from which he dreaded to awake. From the various subjects which engaged their attention, the travellers were, however, at length recalled by their entrance into the town of Bayeux; when they alighted at an inn, where as had already been agreed between them, Adelaide together with Josephine, and guarded by the Chevalier's servant, remained; while the Chevalier, having procured information from the host of a convent in the interior part of the town which received boarders, went thither to inquire whether Adelaide could be admitted.

The

The reply he received was favourable to his wishes, or rather to those of Adelaide; for sensible as he was of the propriety of the arrangement to which they had mutually agreed, yet as the moment of separation drew nigh, he could not submit to it without a degree of reluctance, such as he could neither subdue nor conceal; nor could Adelaide, when on his return to the inn he informed her of his success, observe the deep dejection which overspread his countenance without participating his feelings.

But the considerations which had induced her to decide upon her present plan, were too powerful to suffer her now to waver on the subject; and while she

she endeavoured to silence the secret regret that stole over her heart, with this conviction she resolved on an immediate departure.

Having signified her intention to the Chevalier, who vainly remonstrated against it, urging various motives to induce her at least to postpone her removal to the convent till toward the close of the day, he was at length compelled to submit to her wishes, and unwillingly escort her to the walls which were soon to exclude him from her sight.

In their way thither however, he again reminded Adelaide of the arrangement to which they had mutually agreed,

agreed, claiming a renewal of her promise respecting it; which with a forced smile, and gently reproaching him for having so little confidence in the steadiness of her mind, she again repeated. Ashamed of the weakness he had betrayed, the Chevalier eagerly besought her forgiveness; and having reached the gates of the convent, they at length parted with repeated adieus and mutual regret; and while Adelaide and Josephine hastily crossed the court toward an interior gate that led into the building, the Chevalier lingered without, listening with anxiety for its closing sounds; which while they deprived him of the happiness of beholding her, seemed yet to impart a ray of comfort, by the

the assurance they afforded of Adelaide's safety.

It had been agreed on between them, that as soon as the Chevalier could learn the disposition his sister might entertain toward Adelaide, he should immediately inform her by letter; and in order equally to elude any pursuit, and prevent the sisterhood from obtaining a knowledge of the real particulars of her situation, Adelaide had likewise agreed to the precaution which the anxiety of the Chevalier suggested of his addressing his letters to her under a fictitious name, with directions for their being left at the post office, in preference to being sent to the convent, where they would necessarily pass

through many hands before they were consigned to those of Adelaide; and by furnishing an opportunity for curiosity, their safety might be endangered.

She had promised also to reply to his letters, should any delay of her projected removal from the convent to the protection of the Comtesse D'Albec occur to render it necessary; and although this compliance with his requests, and the look and manner with which they were accompanied, were all calculated to remove the depression of spirits under which he had laboured from the first intimation of her intention of entering a convent, and that even his desire of her removal from thence to the abode of his sister afforded a strong argument

argument to hasten his departure, since his design was personally to solicit the Comtesse on the subject, he still felt it impossible to pursue his original intention of immediately setting forward on his journey.

An irresistible tie seemed to attach him to the place which contained Adelaide, notwithstanding that it no longer afforded him the satisfation of her society; and when evening returned, it still found him pacing slowly beneath the shade of the boundaries that enclosed her. A thousand vague and alarming conjectures, such as passion could alone excuse, assailed his perturbed imagination; nor was it until the appearance of his servant, who, having vainly awaited

ed the return of his master, had at length quitted the inn in search of him, that the Chevalier became conscious of the imprudence of a conduct so likely to excite that attention and curiosity he had so many motives for wishing to avoid.

This consideration, however, instantly fixed his wavering resolution; and on returning to the inn where the post horses had been ordered, and had been waiting for several hours, he immediately set off from thence, leaving his own horses, one of which had been injured in the foregoing part of the journey, to the care of his servant, with directions to follow slowly to the next stage.

While

While the hours had thus heavily elapsed with the Chevalier, the endeavours of Adelaide to conquer the oppression of spirits, which this separation, and many other circumstances contributed to excite, were supported and encouraged by the justness of sentiment from which she had acted, and by the necessity of concealing her feelings from the notice of the society to whom she was now introduced; and to whom the Chevalier had mentioned her as his sister, adding a plausible account of the motives which induced him to place her beneath the care of the lady Abbess. To this lady, Adelaide had immediately been introduced, on following the portress to the parlour; and had undergone the unpleasant necessity of replying to various questions,

questions, which, had she not been previously instructed by the Chevalier, would greatly have disconcerted her. Prepared even as she was, the natural variety of her mind rendered it a more difficult task for her than she had fore-seen; and it was fortunate that the extreme rapidity with which the Abbess urged her different interrogations, prevented her from paying that attention to the answers which would probably have betrayed to her their inaccuracy. From this examination Adelaide was at length released, and gladly escaped to the apartment allotted for her; where, under the plea of illness and fatigue, she obtained the permission of continuing for the remainder of the evening, having slightly partaken of some refresh-

ment that had been offered her in the parlour. The plea of indisposition, which not without some foundation she had made use of to obtain this indulgence, had likewise procured for her the privilege of having a bed placed in a closet, or cell, adjoining her chamber for Josephine, who passed for her servant, and whom she had not as yet an opportunity of instructing in the fabricated tale of which it was necessary she should also be informed.

CHAP. X.

" But, while thy long delay I mourn,
And chide the sweet shades for their guile,
Thou may'st be true."——

ASTONISHMENT and curiosity had been powerfully excited in the mind of Josephine, by the conversation which had passed in the parlour between the Lady Abbess and Adelaide, and at which she had been present; nor was it without considerable difficulty that she refrained from interrupting it, to express her surprise on hearing the lady

Abbess mention the Chevalier as the brother of Adelaide; but the fear of offending the latter (who, reading her sentiments in the countenance of Josephine, endeavoured by significant looks to admonish her of the necessity of silence, whenever the averted eyes of the Abbess permitted her to do so) fortunately restrained her.

On following Adelaide to her chamber, however, she availed herself (as soon as the nun who conducted them thither had withdrawn) of the opportunity of their being left alone, to inquire an explanation of what she had heard; and Adelaide no longer scrupled to relieve her from suspence.

Of

Of the history fabricated by the Chevalier, she informed her circumstantially; and with a mixture of frankness and discretion she also related as much of her real history, as both the services Josephine had already rendered her seemed to entitle her to, and Adelaide judged necessary in order to secure her still more in her interest; and after repeated assurances of secrecy and fidelity on the part of Josephine, they at length separated for the night.

On the following morning Adelaide was formally introduced by the Abbess to the nuns and pensioners; a ceremony she would willingly have excused, preferring to remain in her solitary apartment to being exposed to the scrutiniz-

ing eyes of strangers; but it was a form not to be dispensed with. Notwithstanding the civility with which she was received by every individual of the community, she felt embarrassed at being the object of attentions which either were, or she fancied to be, marked by more than ordinary curiosity; and when the conclusion of dinner admitted of her doing so, she gladly withdrew to her little apartment.

The vesper-bell at length summoned her to prepare for mass; a duty, fatigue and indisposition had in the former part of the day prevented her from performing; but which, with gratitude for the providential rescue from danger she had so lately experienced, she now quitted

quitted her chamber to fulfil. Following the nuns to the chapel where they performed their devotions, she was there seated among the novices and pensioners. The solemnity of the service, particularly of those parts which were accompanied by music, touched all her heart, while it soothed and tranquillized her spirit; and as she joined her low yet fervent accents to the high peal of the organ and swelling chorus of the choir, a sacred calm, such as she had not for many months experienced, pervaded her mind, and seemed to elevate her above the sufferings of this world.

When the service was over, she accepted an invitation from the Abbess to accompany her into the garden of the

convent; where beneath the melancholy cypresses that, ranged on either side the long walks, almost excluded the evening twilight, they continued to walk until a late hour, conversing on serious but general topics, Adelaide carefully avoiding any that might lead to the mention of her own affairs, too little skilled in the art of dissimulation to practise it either with real or affected ease.

Several days elapsed, during which, the monotonous regularity of her life offered little that could withdraw her thoughts from the extraordinary circumstances of her past and present situation.

The behaviour of the Abbess was uniformly

uniformly obliging, and several of the sisters and pensioners appeared desirous of conciliating her friendship; but the reserve which her disguised character imposed from the dread of betraying herself, prevented her from seconding these advances; and without the power of exculpating herself, she had at length the mortification of perceiving that a want of feeling, and even gratitude very foreign to her heart, was imputed to her..

Among the nuns, she had in reality many favourites; but not one that she admired or could compare to her deceased and beloved friend; the superior of the Ursaline convent, the remembrance of whom was dear to her as

 ever,

ever, and now occupied her mind unceasingly, from the scenes by which she was surrounded perpetually reminding her of those she had formerly inhabited, and of that society in which the happiest hours of her eventful life had been spent. The comparison this remembrance excited, was not favourable to the community in which she at present resided; nor could the most strict impartiality have rendered it otherwise; since there were but few of its members who rose above the level of ordinary characters; whereas among the sisters who composed the society of the Ursaline convent, there were many who united the highest accomplishments to every virtue that ought to grace the female character. To the good sense

and benevolence of the superior, the sisterhood had been greatly indebted for the harmony and happiness which had subsisted among them. Her example enforced the precepts she ought to inculcate beyond all that argument could have effected.

Dignified in every action, yet totally devoid of haughtiness; religious without bigotry, or the gloom which too often characterizes those who profess it, and too frequently injures its cause; mild and gentle, though decisive and firm in the practice of justice; she was indeed a striking example of the extensive good which a virtuous mind may diffuse, by acquiring influence over others; and there were few who had spent any

length of time beneath her authority, whose improvement of character did not bear testimony of this truth.

It is not surprising therefore, that Adelaide who had revered and loved her with the affection of a daughter; so powerfully felt the contrast between her former and present superior, the latter of whom was a person of weak mind and inferior talents; and though conscious that it rendered her less satisfied, less disposed to judge favourably of her associates than she might otherwise have done, she felt too much pleasure in contemplating the many virtues of her lamented friend, to refrain from daily, hourly, drawing comparisons in her favour, or from the

the indulgence of recollections, which, though mingled with sadness, were yet precious to her heart. Alone and unobserved, she often lingered under the shade of the cypresses, till long after the sun had sunk behind the distant hills; or wandered through the lonely cloisters and high-arched aisles, whose long perspectives retiring in simple grandeur, veiled in the duskiness of twilight, diffused a solemnity around, congenial to the feelings she delighted to indulge.

Other recollections and other sources of uneasiness at length however obtruded upon her thoughts. The length of time which the Chevalier had mentioned as the period when he hoped to transmit to Adelaide intelligence relative

to

to her proposed removal was past; and day after day still elapsed without bringing any tidings from him. In vain she endeavoured to repress the anxiety this unexpected delay excited, and to deceive, with books and various employments, the tedious hours of uncertainty and suspence; but occupation could no longer withdraw her from herself, nor music even for a moment charm away the sense of sorrow.

That his application to the Comtesse D'Albec had not been attended with the success he expected, she could no longer permit herself to doubt, painful and mortifying as the belief was; yet even this did not afford any explanation of the silence of de Bellecourt; since he

had promised to write to her immediately on his arrival at his sister's. It was possible indeed that his letters had been lost; but the improbability of this accident occurring more than once, soon destroyed this surmise, and it was too unlikely that he should have written but once (if he had written at all) during such a length of time, to be for an instant credited.

Josephine had been regularly sent to the post-office each day at the hour when the post arrived, and had as constantly returned from thence without the wished-for packet.

She had as usual quitted the convent one morning on this her accustomed errand,

errand, and Adelaide impatiently watched the moments till her expected return, when the train of thought in which she sat absorbed was interrupted by the entrance of one of the nuns into her little apartment. This recluse had entertained a predilection in favour of Adelaide from the first moment of her arrival, which by various attentions and acts of kindness she had endeavoured to evince; and although Adelaide wished to avoid any familiarity of intercourse that might lead to inquiries she could not reply to, yet the behaviour of this sister had been so uniformly assiduous that Adelaide could not, without a degree of ingratitude of which she was incapable, refrain from testifying her sense of it. They continued together

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in conversation till the dinner-bell summoned them to the refectory, when Adelaide learnt with surprise that Josephine had not yet returned; and anxiety mingled with her astonishment as she considered the length of time Josephine had been absent.

Perceiving her uneasiness, the lady Abbess, on learning the cause, obligingly offered to send to the post-office to inquire if any extraordinary delay in the arrival of the courier occasioned the protracted stay of Josephine; but far from dissipating her alarm, the return of the messenger most powerfully increased it, by the intelligence he brought of Josephine's having quitted the office more than four hours ago.

That

That night and the following day elapsed without affording any information respecting her; and the apprehensions of Adelaide (who imagined a thousand evils) were hourly aggravated by this unaccountable circumstance: unsuccessful inquiries had been made throughout the town; but no person was either able or willing to give any tidings of her.

On the evening of this second day, a courier on horseback arrived at the convent who delivered a letter for Adelaide; and with anxious impatience she broke the seal in the hope of its affording her some news of Josephine; in this expectation she was disappointed; and anxiety for the fate of this

girl

girl suspending the consideration of her own personal concerns, it was not without considerable regret that she perceived the signature of de Bellecourt, and perused the contents of his epistle. It informed her that a slight indisposition had prevented him from sooner addressing her; a circumstance he doubly lamented, as it delayed the happiness of his sister and of himself, which they flattered themselves they should soon enjoy in her society; and the conclusion (after many assurances of the impatience of the Comtesse to welcome Adelaide to her abode) mentioned, that as the indisposition under which the Chevalier still laboured prevented him from returning to escort her, the carriage and servants of the

Comptesse should be sent for her accommodation and protection on the road, and should attend her in the course of the evening; when if she would proceed immediately to Caen, a female friend of the Comtesse's would from thence accompany her to the Chateau d'Albec.

The satisfaction which at another time Adelaide would have derived from the intelligence contained in this letter was now however considerably allayed by the uneasiness she suffered respecting Josephine, of whom every endeavour to procure information had hitherto proved ineffectual; and she even hesitated whether or not she should avail herself of the kindness of the Comtesse d'Albec,

d'Albec, while the situation of a young person to whom she considered herself so greatly indebted remained thus a matter of uncertainty; but it was necessary to decide on this point without delay, since the domestic who brought the letter had desired the portress to inform Adelaide that the carriage would be at the convent in less than an hour; and as farther reflection only served to convince her of the uselessness of delaying her departure, she at length relinquished the idea; and having desired an audience of the Lady Abbess, she repaired to the parlour to acquaint her with her intended removal.

After an interview of considerable length, during which the Abbess expressed

sed much surprise and regret at the prospect of so soon losing a pensioner whom the policy of the Chevalier de Bellecourt had taught her to believe would have continued very long beneath her protection; and in compliance with the repeated entreaties of Adelaide, promised that every endeavour should be used to procure intelligence of Josephine, (who, if she returned to the convent, should, they agreed, remain there until the Lady Abbess had heard from Adelaide), they at length separated, and Adelaide returned to her chamber to write a short billet to Josephine, assuring her of the continuance of her good will toward her, and of her intention of sending for her as soon as circumstances would permit her to do so.

Scarcely

Scarcely had she concluded writing when she was informed of the arrival of the carriage; and hastily sealing the billet, she once more repaired to the parlour of the Abbess to whose care she consigned it, and of whom, and of the nuns and pensioners (whom the intelligence of this sudden departure had assembled together) with grateful acknowledgements of the attention and kindness she had experienced during her short abode in the convent, she took an affectionate leave.

Attended by several of the sisters, she descended the stairs, and passed onward to the parlour beyond which they dared not accompany her, and where for a short time their repeated adieus again delayed

delayed her. Notwithstanding the satisfaction she felt at the prospect of rejoining de Bellecourt and being welcomed to the abode of his sister, she could not witness the sorrow with which the unexpected tidings of her departure had overwhelmed her friend sister Therese, without participating her feelings; and the unpleasant restraint which the peculiarity of her own situation had compelled Adelaide to assume toward her, she could no longer keep up. Her heart was full; she wept and lingered, but it was necessary to separate; and with many tears and mutual assurances of regard, they at length parted; and Adelaide, placing herself in the carriage which had been for some time in waiting, commenced her journey.

The

The night was dark and gloomy; and wholly unaccustomed as she was to travel alone, and at so late an hour, so recently rescued also from the hands of ruffians, the sensation of dismay with which she lost sight of the walls which enclosed the hospitable Benedictines, and which was strengthened by perceiving that her escort consisted of only two domestics, is not surprising; but she endeavoured to check it; and the prospect of being joined by the friend of the Comtesse d'Albec, whom (as has already been mentioned) she was to meet at Caen, soon enabled her to do so.

Wrapping closely around her the cloak, which with other articles of dress

she had procured at Bayeux previous to entering the convent, and covering her face with the hood, she yielded her mind to the anticipation of her reception at the chateau d'Albec, to which she looked forward with increased impatience, from anxiety to learn the true state of the Chevalier's health; as although he had mentioned his indisposition in very slight terms, yet its being such as to prevent him from personally attending her, was sufficient to convince her that it was more serious than he was willing to acknowledge. This conviction, which in the agitation of her spirits had not till now occurred, occasioned her much uneasiness; and while she vainly wished to accelerate the speed of the horses, she equally ineffectually

effectually regretted the delay which the taking leave of her different friends in the convent had caused.

Deeply absorbed in thought, she continued to travel during several hours, till at length the sudden stopping of the carriage recalled her from her reverie; and concluding that she had already reached Caen, she quickly let down the window, preparing to quit the carriage. In this supposition she was however mistaken; and having learnt with considerable disappointment, that they merely stopped to change horses, she declined alighting, lest her doing so might additionally retard her journey.

As soon as the relay of horses was

procured, the carriage again set forward, and Adelaide once more relapsed into meditation. Various subjects engaged her attention; and though the illness of the Chevalier, and the extraordinary absence of Josephine which chiefly occupied her thoughts were only causes of uneasiness, yet by abstracting her mind from present circumstances, even these beguiled the tediousness of the way.

Morning had already began to dawn, when the uneasy motion of the carriage from the uneven ground over which it was passing again roused her attention; and on looking from the window she perceived the grey walls of an edifice which crowned the acclivity they were approaching.

approaching. But although the woods among which it was shrouded were now leafless, their branches were so thickly interwoven that no feature of it could be distinctly seen; and the high banks overshadowed with thickets between which the road ascended, soon excluded even a glimpse of the walls.

A few minutes however brought them to the summit of the hill, where retired at a short distance among the woods appeared the extensive ruins of an abbey. Of the main body of the edifice little now remained. The roofs had entirely vanished, and even portions of the walls had fallen and lay in masses amongst the woods without; while a tower at the extremity of a mouldering

cloister.

cloister, from the pointed windows of which the ivy and the briony hung in many a fantastic wreath, and a venerable gateway alone served to mark its former strength and grandeur.

The carriage stopped apparently for the purpose of resting the horses; and after the pause of a few moments, during which with those emotions of melancholy awe which are naturally excited by the contrast of such a spectacle, and that beheld by the imagination, Adelaide earnestly surveyed the scene before her, she at length lowered the glass to inquire the name this dilapidated building had formerly borne, and how much farther they had to proceed to Caen, when without replying

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to her inquiries, the driver and the domestic who had followed on horseback both alighted, and having opened the door of the carriage, the former leaped into it, and seizing her rudely in his arms notwithstanding her supplications and her struggles, lifted her forcibly from the seat.

END OF THE THRID VOLUME.

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